CONCEPTUAL

WRITINGS ON ART
TOM MARIONI
1969 - 1999

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The Return of Abstract Expressionism, 1969
Curator's catalog introduction, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California.

When Jackson Pollock and Morris Louis let the paint leave their hands, gravity formed the shape of the stain on the raw canvas. This exhibition of abstract expressionism is a direct extension of the painting of the '50s; the action is the same, only the dimensions are different. The gesture is the same and the procedure similar if more athletic. The artists exhibit the same love of organic and natural forces. They place a familiar emphasis on the role of accident and chance.

The renewed interest in natural forces and raw materials exists for several reasons. There is certainly a tremendous dissatisfaction with the destructive forces of modern culture: war, pollution, and the generally widespread ignorance of nature. Another influence is the popularity of drug use, and the religious importance that it places on an awareness of our environment and also upon the reality of natural processes and environment. But perhaps more importantly, the artists are not interested in producing objects. The majority of the pieces exist only for the duration of the show. There are no photographs in the catalog because some work cannot be seen before installation. In fact, several artists have sent only instructions for the creation of their works. It would harm the intent of the works to frame or reduce them to the degree needed for reproduction, and the nature of the work precludes reproduction. For the first time, the artist is freeing himself from the object. As a result, the historian is now faced with the responsibility of recording the work. The artist is involved with the direct manipulation of materials that possess qualities of spontaneity and improvisation, and those materials normally produce dispensable work.

It is the act of creation which is art.

Conceptual Art Definition, 1970
Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco, California.

Idea oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects.

Real Social Realism, 1976
VISION #2: Eastern Europe, Crown Point Press, San Francisco, California.

Art is a poetic record of the culture, and people understand the culture of the past by studying the art and products of past civilizations. The development of technology in the 20th century has speeded up time; this creates rapid changes in the atmosphere of society and in art. It is now possible to find in art accurate records of the very recent past, encompassing the style of a particular region of the world. In this way, Andy Warhol—a personality and producer of a body of work emphasizing mass-production and repetition—exemplifies the United States of the 1960s, an era we can now recognize as different from today.

Conceptual art, an art of the '70s as it was developed in America, was a reaction against the materialism of the '60s, and records our country's swing away from that frame of mind. Intelligent people in America, and in the world, have become less oriented to personal goods and more aware of the frailty of our world.

We can now see the world from a distance, from the moon in photographs, which gives us a new sense of scale. To be able to see in one picture one-half of our world affects our consciousness in the same way that we were affected by Copernicus when he brought it to our attention that the earth moves around the sun. We began 500 years ago to question that we were made in the image of God when we realized we might not be the center of the universe. Now, we know we are not. Our world seems to get smaller and smaller.

The artist spends his time taking in information. The artist spends more time looking and listening than the layman, and is a trained observer, a private investigator. The artist translates what he sees around him into a form, which in turn becomes part of the culture it defines. The work of art communicates for the artist his intelligence through the visual craftsmanship of the activity or the object. The work of art is not the object; the work of art is the

information that is communicated, a stimulating experience that awakens the intellect through the senses.

Since the end of the 1960s, many artists, not only in America but all over the world, have begun to develop an art of theory, of aesthetic activity, of proposition and study as the form, rather than the production of objects as the aim and purpose of the art.

This art is very strong in Eastern Europe in relationship to object-oriented art, although its development there seems to be for different reasons than its development in the west.

To varying degrees in Eastern European countries the political system, through the control of money, does not allow the manipulation of the art object as a product that can be merchandised and resold, increasing in value and fitting into a supply and demand system. So the art object is automatically less important than in the west. And since the making of art objects is scrutinized and often controlled by political forces, an artist who wishes to explore philosophic ideas may be more free to do so in making actions. These may not be understood by those enforcing repressive political ideas, yet the point will be made to the art community, and so, perhaps, find its way into the culture.

The fact that conceptual art is strong in Eastern Europe as well as in the West shows how small the world has become. The individual works being done by artists show how clearly their culture differs from other cultures in the world.

YUGOSLAVIA

In 1973 at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, Richard Demarco organized an exhibition of Yugoslavian art. This was the first time I became aware of any real art scene in Eastern Europe. On one special day in the gymnasium of the school being used for all the art shows (Joseph Beuys gave a 12 hour lecture in this room the next day), a group of Yugoslavian artists made actions together, all at the

same time, but all independent of each other.

Gergelj Urkom upholstered a chair, by cutting up his shirt and tacking it to the chair.

Rasa Todosijevic painted his left ear and the leaves of a potted plant while his wife held up a sign reading, "Decision as Art."

Nesa Paripovic, who always photographs the back of his own head, made a film of the other artists' activities, always keeping his back to the audience.

The strongest action going on was by Marina Abramovic. She placed her hand on the floor with the fingers spread as far as they would go. Then she began to jab a knife between her fingers, sticking it into the floor with a regular, fast, rhythmic rate. Each time she would miss and stick one of her fingers it would bleed, and she would then quickly pick up another kitchen knife from a row laid out on the floor and begin again without losing the rhythm. She did this until she had gone through all the knives, about seventeen.

The most fascinating thing about all this activity was that it was like a three-ring circus, acts going on simultaneously, each act with a singular character.

Belgrade

The hot water is on the right faucet, the cold on the left. The hotels have mirrors in them, every time you turn around another mirror. I was surprised to see people walking down the street eating corn on the cob. Men have small stoves, the kind for cooking chestnuts, to cook corn on the cob almost black.

There is a personality, an unusual character, who lives outside Belgrade on a farm. He has changed his name to Harry Jackson, the most American name he could come up with. It's in the phone book and looks totally out of place among the Slavic

names. He doesn't speak English, and has never been to America, but he rides into Belgrade on horseback dressed in a complete cowboy outfit like Roy Rogers.

There are two interesting museums: A War Museum that is immense. It is surrounded by tanks, and guns from both world wars. Inside it begins with the earliest wars—with the Turks—showing all the weapons and armor. In each room there is a history of war, through the Second World War, every weapon, every uniform, pieces of shrapnel, photographs, maps, everything. And a museum of the concentration camps (not actually where they were) with grim objects, drawings and small photos that belonged to the prisoners. One very powerful object inside a glass case was a human bone wrapped with a piece of rusted wire and a small piece of cloth, like a sculpture. It brought on a strong emotional feeling like no other object I have ever seen.

The old concentration camps are mostly used by the academic abstract painters as their living quarters and studios; it looks something like an art school around there.

The official art of Yugoslavia is abstract art, as it is in most of the western world. I remember Nelson Rockefeller saying on a TV special that the great thing about abstract art is that you can see anything you want in it. In Yugoslavia abstract art is no threat to the government; since its content is not known it couldn't be critical of the society. By official art I mean paintings and sculptures that are purchased by government-run museums or the art of artists to whom special favors or allowances are given.

Mica Popovic, a man about fifty, made an important political statement two or three years ago in Belgrade. He had been painting portraits for some time. For this show he painted ex-art and -theater critics who had been denounced because of their criticism of the government. These portraits were painted in all black and white and gray, and in each painting the subject was holding an umbrella. Popovic had an exhibition in an official gallery and showed these por-

traits, along with a photo-realist-style painting that he had copied from the Sunday paper. This was of a color photograph of the queen of Holland posed with President Tito, who was wearing gold rings, gold medals, and looking very fat and rich. This was an exact copy, in color, of the photo used in the newspaper. The day this show opened, the government closed it without explanation.

Last year the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade opened a Salon, a gallery in the city, away from the museum. The museum is on the outskirts of town, on the Danube River, and stands alone with no other buildings near it. The city is proud of its modern museum, but I don't think very many people visit it. At least the two times I was there, no other people were in it except employees.

The Salon, run by Irina Subotic, presents exhibitions of conservative modern art to keep the officials of the museum happy, so that she can organize a few more contemporary shows. In September she organized, in collaboration with an avant-garde theater, a series of performances in the gallery and exhibitions in the theater, with a discussion on the influences of theater on the plastic arts and vice versa.

There is a high level of social life among the art community in Belgrade. There are many discussions, lectures, art-film and theater festivals organized every year. The artists travel more and meet with each other more than in other places I have seen in Europe. There is great communication and political awareness among artists.

The main gallery of contemporary art in Belgrade is the Student Culture Center, located near the center of town in an old police building that was obtained during a student revolt in 1968. It has a theater, a lounge that serves Turkish coffee and soft drinks, lecture halls, a book store, a library and a gallery. The gallery, which shows mostly conceptual art, is run by Dunja Blazevic and Biljana Tomic. Each April they have an art festival called the "April Meeting," and artists are invited from all over Europe to participate in the activities.

My first visit to Yugoslavia, in 1974, was to perform an action for the "April Meeting." At that time I renewed my friendship with several of the artists I had met in Edinburgh the year before.

Marina Abramovic presented an action for the "April Meeting." After cutting her hair off, she lay inside a five-pointed flaming red star with her head, arms and legs in each of the points. She passed out from the intense heat and had to be taken home. Marina is a 29-year-old instructor in an art school. She lives with her mother (who is curator of the academic museum in Belgrade) and her grandmother. Many of her works have a feminist orientation relating to imprisonment and bleeding. Gina Pane (French) and Valie Export (Austrian) are two other important women artists who deal with similar ideas.

Rasa Todosijevic, who had been at Edinburgh, seemed to me on this trip to be the most alive artist I encountered, and the most positive. We were walking down the street, and a goddess of a woman passed us; Rasa said that her walk was more important than the whole of twentieth-century art. In 1972 Rasa Todosijevic painted the word DA (YES) on a loaf of bread and sent out photo postcards of it. He calls his work "Homo Art;" he predicts that creativity "will become a biological characteristic of the species and not only of the gifted individual."

Gergelj Urkom was in Belgrade for the "April Meeting," but only as a visitor. He has moved to London, England, where he works in a toy factory. However, he was an influence in the development of Yugoslavian conceptual art. An important work was done in 1971 at the Student Culture Center. The gallery's policy is to provide materials for an artist's exhibition. Gergelj Urkom was in need at the time of two blankets. So the gallery purchased the blankets, and he exhibited them, folded, in the gallery. Afterwards he used them to keep warm in his home.

Another artist who has left Yugoslavia is Radamir Damnjan, who now lives in Italy. In an exhibition in 1973 he sat at a table and

stamped pieces of paper "FREE ART WORK" then passed them out. Also in that year he sent out cards with a picture of his friends all standing in a row, with the name of a famous artist over each person. This work was titled "Misinformation."

Zoran Popovic is back in Yugoslavia now, after spending a year in New York in Joseph Kosuth's studio. He became influenced by the language art movement, wrote an article for The Fox magazine. He now works only with language. Before he went to New York he was making dance-like gestures with small lights attached to his fingertips, and in a darkened room could make forms by moving his arms, drawing in space.

I noticed in Yugoslavia, as in the rest of Europe and in America, there is a good deal of exhibition of conceptual art documentation. The way it is displayed in Belgrade is that the photos, usually enlargements taken from magazines, are sandwiched between two pieces of glass and wrapped with string on both sides to hold them together. Then they are hung from the moldings by strings, like paintings. So when you enter two different galleries it looks like the same show from a distance.

Even today a lot of people all over the world think conceptual art is documentation: photos, text about activity, maps, diagrams, etc., hung on the wall like so many paintings. This kind of thing makes information about works accessible to many people because it can be easily reproduced, but it shouldn't be confused with the work.

In the beginning, the photo documentations were deliberately unprofessional, to try to avoid the confusion that it might be a photography exhibition. (A few years ago someone I know visited New York and I asked him if he saw any interesting shows there. He told me that he saw a good show by a Dutch photographer named Jan Dibbets.)

Another thing about Belgrade: it is a big film city. Tito is a movie buff; he has invited American movie stars to his house to enter-

tain them. You can see film sets of concentration camps, and American cowboy towns (they use Turks as Indians). Belgrade is the Hollywood of East Europe.

It has been completely re-built since its destruction during the war, very ordinary functional architecture, very ugly city.

Zagreb

Zagreb was not destroyed during the war, and is smaller, close to the Austrian border. It is very much like a small Vienna, very beautiful.

There is an Academy of Art, a Culture Center with a gallery that organizes, among others, exhibitions of conceptual art.

There is an important gallery known in Western Europe, called the Gallery of Contemporary Art.

There is also a group of artists working collectively to make public art, for example transparent Plexiglas garbage receptacles they place on street corners to encourage people into ecological awareness—not a known phenomenon yet in eastern Europe.

From a westerner's point of view the best-known Yugoslavian artist, Braco Dimitrijevic, lives in Zagreb.

Braco Dimitrijevic told me he thinks Yugoslavia should be considered part of the Mediterranean area, and not part of the Eastern bloc. Yet Braco's work strongly reflects the socialist culture of his society. It is, to me, the perfect example of social realism.

"Casual passer-by I met at 11:40 a.m., Zagreb, 1969," is one of his titles. Ordinary people he meets on the street completely by chance are selected by him to be made the subject of his work. He will put them on magazine covers, or make their names or faces prominent in a public place. A large photo blow-up, approximately 15

feet high, of a casual passer-by was hung on the outside of a public building in Dusseldorf 1972. A similar work involved three persons he met in 1971 in Zagreb. These photo blow-ups were hung on the outside of a building, as they often hang photos of Lenin, Marx and Engels. In 1974 Braco Dimitrijevic gave a cocktail party for a casual passer-by in the Student Culture Center.

For an artist living in Eastern Europe, where there is practically no support system at all for contemporary artists, it was a logical conclusion that fame is only a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

HUNGARY

I took the train to Budapest and got there in the morning. I asked this young guy where I could change my money, and if he could show me. So we went outside with my bags and got in his car and drove to the other side of town. I was getting worried that I'd made a mistake; he explained to me that he would give me the same rate of exchange that the bank would (and it turns out he did), but we had to go to his house to get the money. We drove to a part of town that looked like a big city slum, and I waited in the car thinking any minute someone would come out and beat me up. But he returned, changed my money (it was only $20), and drove me back to the center of town. We drove through the industrial part of Budapest. It seemed very much like I imagine Moscow is like—old, sooty buildings, high, odd-looking dump trucks, lots of workers on the street all wearing the same clothes. It was the middle of the morning; my acquaintance explained that the workers were changing shifts.

I was dropped off at a hotel, and after going to several hotels I found out there were no rooms available anywhere, because of East German tourists. I called Gabor Attalai, an artist I knew about, and he invited me to come over that evening. So I decided to look around Budapest that day, see him, then take a late-night train to Czechoslovakia.

In Budapest the buildings are all large-scale and old, very old, like a storybook. Everything is oversized. Lots of sidewalk cafes, Wine is expensive, but the price of bread hasn't gone up in 25 years, only a few pennies a loaf. People in other Eastern European countries can understand each other's languages, but Hungarian is totally different. In Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, German seems to be the second language. Everyone must learn Russian in school.

Gabor Attalai spoke English. He lives in a modern apartment like one in the United States—TV, hi-fi, bookshelves, modern furniture. He was very interested in hearing about American art and the system for buying and selling art in the U.S. He told me that since the Hungarians and the Czechoslovakians resisted when the Russians took over, they now have less freedom than the Poles, who only passively resisted. Official art is art that glorifies work; any art that suggests fantasy or that criticizes the state is not tolerated.

So Hungarian artists meet secretly to exhibit and see work, in a kind of speakeasy, which they call (among themselves) the Young Artists' Club Gallery.

Gabor Attalai has made many works and actions that represent a kind of frustration and stopping of information: a suffocation piece called "In Isolation. When a man cannot get or give information." In this work his eyes were bandaged, his mouth and his nose, his fingertips, all were bandaged.

When I saw Attalai he was doing a series of common everyday objects which he called Red-y-mades, and painted red. He had also been making prints of his face and feet by painting them and pressing them onto paper. He would press the paper onto his face the way you make fingerprints, rolling from left to right. The impressions were animal-like, like the head and feet of some kind of beast.

I asked Attalai about other interesting artists in Hungary and he suggested I contact Visy Laszlo, who sent me the following description of a work done in 1974: "Soil was put in a flowerpot, 15

to 20 grains of wheat on it, and again a layer of soil 2 cc. thick. This was covered with a layer of bitumen with .07-I cc, thickness. The watering of the flowerpot was made from below. Till now not one single plant broke through the layer of bitumen."

This experiment suggests the stopping of growth, which relates to the government's oppression of the people in a very abstract way. It's a secret language among artists, like the secret language in the lyrics of rock music of the '60s, which made references to drugs that were only understood by a hip young generation.

Before I left Gabor Attalai he told me the story of Jan Micoch, a Czechoslovakian artist who came to Budapest to make an exhibition in the Young Artists' Club. Micoch bandaged his chest with bandages and put a layer of dirt between his body and the bandages. Inside the dirt were earthworms, and he had a small tube that went down into the earth. He could put water in there to keep the earth moist so the worms would stay alive. He brought these worms from Prague on the train to Budapest. When he got to the gallery he took his shirt off and unwrapped the bandages and exposed the dirt and the worms, as his action for this exhibition. What excited Attalai about this action was that this man had brought a piece of the Czechoslovakian earth and its animals across the border with no papers or passports or permission to transport them.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

When I got to Czechoslovakia I met Jan Micoch, and I told him how Attalai had described the piece he did in Budapest. He laughed, and said that the Hungarians are very politically oriented, and they would see the work as being full of intrigue and mystery. As far as he was concerned, the work was about his relationship with the worms.

But to me how the work was transported was very interesting. I also see what Attalai had seen in the work. Usually an artist makes works by instinct, and sometimes he only fully understands his

own work after some time, or after someone else points something out to him. This has happened to me in my work.

Micoch sees himself as a kind of St. Francis, communing with the land and the animals. He has done other works that involve such communion. One was called "Washing. I washed my body and my hair in presence of my friends." Another was the discovering of a head of cabbage, with his feet feeling the cabbage, tearing it apart, learning about the cabbage with his feet. This action was performed in an abandoned cloister, which seems to be the only place, along with Petr Stembera's attic, where these artists can make their actions for their friends.

Petr Stembera is well known in the conceptual art world in Europe. His most interesting work for me was the transplanting of a twig onto his arm. He cut his arm and taped a small twig to the cut, wrapping it up in straw. Another work he did (in 1971) was the transposition of two stones. He carried the stones from one place to another in a basket-like sack on his back.

Petr Stembera keeps in touch with artists all over the world by mail. He writes on art and maintains a library of catalogues. He has a great hunger for information on works of art. He works in the museum library in Prague and is a genteel and generous person.

Another artist who is a friend of Petr Stembera is Karel Miller. He makes Zen-like actions, very simple discoveries. In a work by Karel Miller called "The Wastepaper," he collected a small pile of trash from the street. He did another action called "The Touch" in which he touched the surface of small metal sewer lids in the street. Another one was called "Discovering of the River," where he felt the ground until he came to the water. His actions are beautifully simple.

Karel Miller and Petr Stembera collaborated in a work for an exhibition in 1974 in Yugoslavia. For that exhibition Petr Stembera wrote the following statement: "Our collaboration consists in resembling thinking, but our works there are distinct enough. Both we give

preference (priority) to experience and activity over pure conceptualism, and our works meet temporary in the point of polarities. But while for Karel Miller the polarities there are one of main problems, the main problem for me there is the experience and realization of my body in three different ways: A. Activities; B. Passivities: Exercise of the will and body; C. Ascetical Pieces."

An artist older than Micoch, Miller and Stembera is Milan Knizak. He was involved in the first happenings in Europe, and in the '60s visited Kaprow in New York. In 1971 Knizak produced a book called Zeremonien, published by Vice-Versand, German publishers of conceptual art works. The cover of this issue of VISION is the image from the endpapers of that book.

The book was discovered by Czechoslovakian authorities in the luggage of a German collector in a border search, and Knizak was arrested and sent to jail. A letter was sent out to the contemporary art world asking for petitions of support for Knizak to be sent to the Czech government. I don't know if the petitions helped, but he is out of jail now. In answer to my request for photos of new work he wrote, "I'm sorry I can't send any new photos right now, maybe later. Now I'm working on global architecture problems."

When I was in Yugoslavia I met the curator, Jindrick Chalupecky, of the Museum of Art in Prague. He was in Yugoslavia on an exchange program. He gave me one name that turned out to be interesting. Milan Grygar has been making, since 1968, "acoustic drawings" with objects that make noise, very much in the John Cage tradition. I visited his studio with several artists and Mr. Zemina, who is a friend and photographer of the conceptual artists; he acted as translator for me in Prague.

Two of Milan Grygar's works are illustrated in VISION. "Homage to Magic," 1974, was performed in Poland, at the Museum of Art in Lodz. It included mechanical birds walking around on a piece of paper after having their feet dipped in ink; these made track-

ings around a top hat placed on a table like a magician's stand. Another work, done in 1973, was a tactile drawing. Grygar sat behind a large sheet of paper that had holes cut in it, his arms extending through the holes. He exchanged a bucket of paint from hand to hand, reaching into the bucket with the opposite hand and making markings on the paper in a groping manner.

Grygar also makes scores for music that are visual scores, grid patterns, to be interpreted by the musician.

There was a good gallery in Prague before the Russians took over that showed Beuys, the Gutai artists and other far out art. In the late sixties the Russians closed the gallery and they put the director in jail. His name is Jindrich Chalupecky.

A few things about Prague: I noticed that in the train station there weren't any seats to sit down on. They had a small waiting room, which was for people traveling first class; otherwise, there weren't any benches, not anywhere in the train station. People were just kind of standing around. Another thing I noticed, the beer in Czechoslovakia is really good, the best.

The only car made in Czechoslovakia comes only in black. Generally, all the people's clothes are black or gray or brown. The only bright color you ever see is red.

POLAND

Warsaw looks old, but the Old Town has been completely rebuilt since the war. It has been done with great care and craftsmanship, working from old plans and photographs, and every detail is as it was before the war. But I had the feeling of being in a movie set.

I was walking down the street in Warsaw and a man came up to me and said, "Change money." There are specialty shops that sell foreign goods, and they only accept dollars. But it is illegal for Poles to have dollars. At the border I had to show the officials all my

money, any kind of money I had, and when I left all that money had to be accounted for. I had to change $10 a day at the border, before entering, for the length of time on my visa, ten days.

The food is mostly overcooked, and the main dish usually consists of ground meat made into patties called "cutlets." The only salad you can get is cabbage. Three out of five days a week they are out of beer and wine in restaurants (and the beer is the worst).

Poland is the most disorganized country I visited on this trip. There is no spirit of competition. A waiter in a restaurant sent us away at the door saying, "We only have chicken and it's not very good." He is paid by the state whether he works well or not. If he changes jobs he makes the same money in the other job.

Everyone works in Poland; there is no unemployment. Most people make about $200 a month. Perhaps this buys more there than $200 buys here (rent and food are cheaper, clothes and goods are not), but even if it bought twice as much, you can see that the general standard of living is about what people on unemployment have here.

To own a car represents years of saving, and anyone who has one thinks of himself as superior. In the city, cars have the right-of-way over pedestrians or anything else, but in the country a car is less imposing. The traffic repeatedly gets hung up behind the many horse-drawn carts on the narrow roads.

It takes days to get permission to do things. The bureaucracy is so thick that communists from the West have changed to capitalism after visiting Poland. The Russians are accepted in a melancholy way. They run the show.

Wieslaw Borowski, who runs the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw, told me a "Russian story" in which the Czar, at the end of the 19th century, wanted to make a railroad from Moscow to Leningrad. He drew a line on the map, and his finger was in the way of the ruler so that at one point there was a little bump in the line. The engineers

built the railroad exactly in a straight line from Moscow even if they had to move mountains and tear down important buildings, but when they came to the bump on the map the tracks circled out in an arc, then went back to becoming a straight line again.

This story was told to illustrate a Russian-totalitarian mentality, but it seems to me to be a mentality now (discontentedly) shared by the Poles. Polish artists have more cultural freedom than the Czechs and Hungarians because of their relatively passive position towards their oppressors. But they also have less creative spirit. It's a hell of a thing to say after only a ten-day visit to Poland. But it looked to me like most of the art is a repetition of ideas of other very recent art outside the country, sometimes deliberately and sometimes without the knowledge of ground that has already been covered. There aren't many conceptual artists whose work has a distinct Polish character. The art doesn't seems to have a political content. There's no real competition. There are at least half a dozen galleries that show exclusively conceptual art. The state wants to look modern, so it allows very modern art, even though it doesn't support it.

A passage from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, quoted by a Polish artist, Zbigniew Gostomski, in a catalog, seems to sum up the Polish attitude: "To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity."

Gostomski has an exhibition every year at the Foksal Gallery, a very good gallery that brings artists from Western Europe and other Eastern European countries for exhibitions. Gostomski works with numbers and systems. He spent some time in New York last year. His work has a philosophic nature and is influenced by Mel Bochner and Sol LeWitt.

Another Polish artist working with numbers is known in New York, as he had a show at the John Weber Gallery last year.

Roman Opalka dates all his paintings 1965- , since he did his first number painting in 1965 and has committed himself to keep on doing them until infinity. He conceives of each painting as a fragment of the larger work—numbers in succession, each fragment picking up where the previous one left off.

One of Poland's best-known artists is a woman named Natalia Lach-Lachowicz. Her work is very much influenced by traditional body art gestures from the west. She is doing a series of works called "Consumer Art," where she eats bananas and other phallic-shaped foods.

As far as I can see, the most interesting visual artists in Poland are twin brothers, Waclaw and Lasiaw Janiccy. They do actions together and they're also part of a group with a third person, Lestow Stokiosa, called the Druga Grupa. The twin brothers work together in trick situations. They made a film without a sound track; they add the sound in live presentation.

An exhibition of the Druga Grupa in the Foksal Gallery in 1973 was an environment of sand and dirt. Hidden inside the sand were gemstones (made of glass). The public was invited to sift the sand to find the treasure. A uniformed guard was part of the exhibition.

The Druga Grupa has also produced and packaged their own oil paint in tubes, in special colors. These were sold, and as they were used they to some extent dictated the look of the paintings done with them.

As far as the Poles are concerned, the most important artist in Poland is not a visual artist but a theater producer. His theater works are visually oriented, and he has a close association with visual artists, many of whom act in his productions. He designs his own costumes and own props and elements in the theater, and many of the objects that he uses are sculpture works that he has exhibited in galleries and museums.

But his art is theater, and he believes "the theater is above all art." The real content Tadeusz Kantor's life-art is the fact of his director-conductor position in his work. He did a very revealing work, "The Conducting of the Sea from a Chair" on the beach. He moves inside his productions as if he were an invisible man of the future pulling all the strings of the action of his fantasy world. Kantor wrote, "We say, 'to act a part.' But 'acting' is neither a reproduction nor reality itself. It is something between reality and illusion." To me, visual art is either reality (sculpture) or illusion (painting). Theater is, truly, something else—a collection of all the other arts. The members of that profession often borrow ideas from the visual arts, changing them into something else—and at the same time often make them accessible to the general public, so putting them into the popular culture.

One reason Kantor is so important in Poland is that during the war when the Nazis occupied the country he was making underground theater about fascism. He was also very much of a pioneer in the days of the happenings.

Every day he gets a massage and he has a French lesson. These two things are very important to him, before anything else.

Artists sometimes talk about a "democratic" position. It is usually in opposition to an "elitist" position. It is accessible to, easily understood by, "the people."

On my trip to Eastern Europe it became clear to me that an artist who attempts to make art to reach "the people" is making self-conscious art; he is like a politician trying to get votes.

But an artist who makes art to express the essence of his culture often produces a work of art so complex or so unusual in form that its subtleties of craftsmanship are only received by other artists—sometimes only by other artists within the same specialized area, as color-field painting, or performance sculpture, or language art. Then

later that work, the surface look of it, is translated and simplified and brought to the attention of the general public through fashion, film, TV, advertising, writers of popular culture, etc. In this way the public "sees" the work of an artist, sometimes years after its conception. It looks as if the artist was ahead of his time, able to see into the future. But in reality he was only observing and reporting a state of mind which already existed, but which had not yet been understood as a philosophic position, as a comment worth listening to.

Many young artists in the U.S. feel that they are taking a radical position by "no value judgment" placed on art "of the people, by the people and for the people."

But "people's art" is the official position in Eastern Europe, and an examination of the work of artists there has convinced me that now, not only in Eastern Europe but here as well, the elitist position is the radical one.

Hard Bop, 1976
VISION #3: New York City, Crown Point Press, San Francisco, California.

This is the way it works: The artist, a reporter, observes society and his environment, the character of the city or country he lives in, the people, everything. He integrates himself into his environment with the intensity of an animal in nature. The artist makes a gesture (a work of art), a philosophical statement. The work is virtually invisible to most of the world, at least the meat of it, the point of it. It is observed by a lower level of reporter, the media, and is simplified; that is, the subject of the work of art is taken and translated into theater, fashion, movies, window displays, advertising, magazines and TV. Eventually the public copies it in their lives, using the work as visual slang, and the artist is seen as having been ahead of his time and able to predict the future.

In the first issue, *California*, I got all my disappointment with museums and support systems off my chest. In the second issue I was more relaxed and discussed the art of Eastern Europe in a very personal style. Almost nobody outside Eastern Europe knows anything about the art in those countries, so I felt I could be more informal. However, in this third issue, *New York City*, I'm talking about art and artists everybody in the contemporary art world knows. A lot of the art magazines published in the world come out of New York, and most of the art discussed in them is from New York. So what you are getting here is a Northern Californian artist's view of New York.

My descriptions of works are a simplification, and in some cases an over-simplification, of the content of the work. It is my assumption that the work of the artists mentioned in this issue is known to the majority of readers, as these artists have shown their works internationally and been written about in the art press. So I am reproducing mostly very small photos alongside the text, to serve as reminders of the work and function as a simplification, as does the text.

Stuart Davis used to listen to jazz while he painted. He was a New Yorker and his paintings reflected it. He was American painting, and David Smith was American sculpture. This was pre-war. I think the real link between Europe and America was Max Ernst.

Ernst one day punched a hole in the bottom of a tin can that was full of paint and hanging by a string. He whacked the can and let the paint drip onto a canvas on the floor as a gesture of surrealist automatic writing. Jackson Pollock saw this and developed it into a full-blown action painting, abstract expressionism, which along with jazz was the first true American art form—and Pollock became the father of American art.

This American New York art was anti-intellectual, physical painting, a direct record of the artist's body—or in the case of Willem de Kooning, the artist's arm. By the early fifties the abstract expressionists had become superstars. The first time for American artists. New York became the marketplace. Artists began to study in New York instead of Europe.

Later on, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns became the link between action painting and pop art. Rauschenberg, who is basically a printmaker, introduced a transfer system of commercially printed photos from magazines into his work. He would wet the pictures with turpentine and then rub the backside with a pencil, transferring the image (and also reversing it as in printing) onto paper, making the photo image very gesture-like. Later he used photo silkscreen images printed on canvas as elements in his paintings, then extended the idea of collage into three dimensions by painting on mattresses and incorporating actual objects into his paintings.

While Rauschenberg's work became three-dimensional, Jasper Johns used two-dimensional images such as flags, targets, numbers and letters as the subjects of his work. These images, like Rauschenberg's, were painterly, gestural and sketchy (still kind of expressionistic), but they used literal images of contemporary culture. Johns's paintings were defining the picture plane. No push/pull, all

on the same plane. In introducing this kind of thinking he changed the nature of painting. Pop art came out of Johns's subject matter and Rauschenberg's technique. The big three of pop art are Warhol, Lichtenstein and Oldenburg.

Andy Warhol exemplifies for me the New York culture of the sixties more than any other person. He has taken elements of the culture (Campbell Soup cans, grid paintings made up of photo images of products), simplified them and re-introduced them through the art gallery. By repeating the images many times he has driven home an advertising technique. His studio became "The Factory." Assistants made his paintings. Portraits of famous people and events in the news were photo silk-screened on canvas. Warhol established the corporate image for the artist. His work had departments: painting, rock and roll band, films, magazine, etc. His early films were real-time studies—a man eating a peach, a man sleeping for eight hours, a twenty-four hour film of the Empire State Building (showing the gradual changes of the shadows cast from the sunlight). This revolutionized the concept of visual art, a pre-video use of real-time consciousness, a study of slow transformation. I think this concept is the most significant part of his work. When he began films he suggested the end of painting, but in the last few years he has returned to painting. The later paintings are photo silk-screened on canvas, as are the earlier ones, but he has added the hand of the artist, some abstract expressionist-like strokes around the background—as in commercial photo portraiture. Warhol has become the twentieth century Rembrandt, portrait painter of the rich and famous.

The key to Lichtenstein is parody. He translated the abstract expressionist brush stroke from a quick gesture to a blown-up screened photo image, black and white with no middle tones. This was the pictorial representation of an anti-intellectual movement. He has done parodies on other art styles (his latest paintings parody stripe painters, like Noland), but the brush-stroke paintings were the most biting. His first pop paintings of comic book characters mostly showed the translation of commercial printing technique into painting. Later his sculptures—manikin heads, cups and saucers—had the

screen dots painted on the objects as if they were shadows, translating the illusion of painting onto a three-dimensional object. And still later he moved into art deco style, chrome and glass sculptures. Lichtenstein and Stella together were probably responsible for the popularity of the return of the thirties streamlined look in fashion and furniture.

Claes Oldenburg came to New York from Sweden as a boy. He remembered how things look as a child when you are small. When he became big he made common everyday objects bigger and soft as in a child's view. Picasso, an obvious influence on Oldenburg, spent his entire life trying to paint like a child, to have the freedom of a child. Oldenburg sought not so much the child's freedom but the child's viewpoint, and he reports this seriously and playfully at the same time. His early works were sculptures of food. He made his studio into an environment (The Store) and opened it to the public to sell his sculptures. His works became so large in scale they turned into architectural monuments, the most giant only realized in drawings: noses made into tunnels, large alphabet letters built into the cityscape. A few have been realized as public sculpture—giant lipstick, icebag (the erotic nature of the soft sculptures is the most obvious fact of them), three-way plug. The three-way plug is corten steel and is partially buried in the ground as if it had fallen from the sky like a particle from a civilization overscaled to us. Another realized monumental work is the mouse, a large welded steel piece painted bright red in the tradition of David Smith. The ears are like film canisters on top of a movie camera; the mouse is the camera, the eye of the contemporary artist. Oldenburg was also one of the key people making happenings in New York; he was the only sculptor in the group.

Allan Kaprow was the inventor of the word "happenings" and was a pioneer in the visual art world. He made a commitment to happenings, a total art, and quit painting, unlike the other artists involved in the late fifties and early sixties (most of them made happenings more for fun than as a statement). Kaprow also did very early environmental works, like a gallery filled with rubber tires in 1961. In his happenings he would bring together friends to experience a

total environment, under his direction, in an audience-participation, theater-like situation. Lately he has published small books as scripts for a few people to enact and experience tactile and psychological situations.

A parallel movement to happenings was the fluxus artists, a group of Europeans and Americans who developed a worldwide communications network as part of their art, sending works through the mail. These artists, influenced by the dadaists and John Cage, were very oriented to performing experimental music, street theater and absurdist activities. The piano became a symbol, and people chopped up pianos or beat them with the carcasses of chickens for the sounds produced as well as the shock value and spectacular visual effect.

George Maciunas, a key member of the fluxus group, organized shows and produced "flux kits," made up of small multiples and printed matter from the group. Maciunas performed a concert by nailing down every octave of a piano, a nail through each key, one at a time. He also sawed a piano into small pieces and sold the sections as a multiple.

To backtrack a little, there was another movement, "hard-edge," that Jasper Johns influenced. This time it was Johns's method more than his subject matter. From painted flag to painted stripes. Stella said, what you see is all there is, there isn't any other meaning. This attitude had (still has) great currency in New York, particularly among painters. Artists have said this about their work even if on later reflection, they have found it not to be true.

Frank Stella was almost a child prodigy. A friend of mine said, "Stella is the only person I know of who started out as an artist and ended up as an art student." He showed several of his paintings at the Museum of Modern Art almost immediately after graduating from art school; this was in 1959. Although Barnett Newman and Ellsworth Kelly had already firmly established a kind of minimal hard-edged style of painting, Stella popularized it. He became a new hero to young artists. He turned the stretcher bars on their sides so the

paintings would have thicker edges and stick out more from the wall, like objects. He made shaped canvases. The wall the painting hung on became the field and the image (shape) became the painting. Stella was cooking, and every two years he exhausted a series of paintings: first black, then silver bands; then triangular shapes jutting outside rectangular shapes, then a protractor series; circles, half-circles, each time bolder and bolder. He is now in the position of seeing his current paintings sold for less money than the work of ten years earlier when he was at the height of his creative ability. But he did have an influence, especially on painting, and on the popular culture in graphic design (super-graphics).

Up until 1962 sculpture had taken second place to painting. But the primary structure, mainly the cube, was to become the symbol for New York art in the sixties.

The philosophy was: the less there is to see, the more there is to say. Sculpture was no longer as described in the dictionary, carved or modeled; it was fabricated and constructed. In 1962 Tony Smith, architect and designer, ordered from a steel foundry a six-foot box welded of quarter-inch steel with the welds ground smooth, and had it delivered to the exhibition it was shown in. This action clearly explained that the hand of the artist was not necessary in the production of a work of art. It was instrumental in changing the thinking about the place of concept in art, although that kind of thinking had existed among artists already. The work is more important as a public statement of an attitude than as artwork in itself.

Robert Morris reduced sculpture to its simplest form—geometric shapes painted medium gray. Some of them emitted light between two forms that were almost touching, like a door opened a crack, suggesting some life inside the architecture-like forms.

Sol LeWitt came to prominence in the early sixties as one of the leading minimal sculptors. He made sculptures to be looked through, not necessarily at, grids in three dimensions. Later they were done in series, using combinations of stacking possibilities. In the late

sixties he began wall drawings which signaled for him a move away from object art into conceptual art. These drawings are usually executed by other people according to a descriptive plan. I will talk more about both Morris and LeWitt later.

Carl Andre was probably the most important sculptor of the sixties. He selected building materials, bricks for example, and laid them side by side in a row like blocks. These sculptures could be assembled, disassembled, and reassembled as the same or another work. He established a recycling technique in art by reusing the same material over and over again to make new work. Last year the Tate Gallery in London bought an Andre work from ten years ago. The public (in newspaper editorials) was outraged by museum funds being spent for a bunch of bricks. They also could not understand why the bricks had to be sent from America instead of using English bricks. The director of the Tate Gallery seems incapable of explaining the content of the work to the public, and recently someone threw blue dye on the work and it had to be removed from display to be restored. Someone else in the night dumped a load of bricks on the steps of the gallery to protest this purchase. The public thinks if it doesn't look like art it isn't art. They look only for the familiar. A frog can only see small, bite-size moving objects, insects for instance, because it spends its life looking for food, and its brain blocks out everything else. "Someone stole the sculptures off the pedestals" was a comment by a member of the public in a show of minimal sculpture in 1962.

Dan Flavin took existing fluorescent lights and their fixtures and used them to make his sculptures. He can install a retrospective anywhere in the country without sending or bringing any work with him, just by going to the hardware store and buying the fixtures and installing them in the local museum. Although the fixtures hang on the wall like paintings, the work is sculpture—the work is the light, which extends out so many inches into the space and is a volume, an object you can pass your hand through. Interestingly, Flavin makes his work in editions of three, one for Europe, one for America, and one to keep. Of course the work can be put together

again later, and dated at the time of conception.

Minimal art was, almost by definition, quiet and refined. But Richard Serra, a later minimalist working with slab-like forms, became the last of the heavy-duty, aggressive sculptors in the tradition of David Smith. However, Smith's work was welded, constructed, whereas Serra's was created for particular spaces. It leaned, supported by use of gravity and by its own weight and position. The Stedlijk Museum, Amsterdam, recently installed a Serra work in its sculpture garden, and embedded the base of the steel slabs in the ground, so that although the slabs touch each other they are no longer obviously supporting each other. This piece retreats in its philosophy to the era of David Smith. Serra's work has a great energy force on the spaces in which it is placed because of its sheer size, weight and materials. One work, which he created for the Pasadena Museum, was a large trunk of a tree sawed into sections, leaving the sawdust on the floor where they were cut. The sections were of such enormous dimensions they were overwhelming inside the gallery, dominating the space. Later, after the exhibition, the sections of cut tree were moved outdoors by the museum staff, where the work lost all sense of proportion. They eventually paid somebody to take it away. The sculpture was about the relationships of the objects within the space they were placed in, and this work of art no longer existed when it was moved outdoors where its scale was lost.

Out of minimal art, a rejection of it—especially the early minimal art that generally disguised materials—came the style called antiform. Robert Morris, Barry Le Va, Bruce Nauman of California and Eva Hess, a German-born New Yorker, were the chief artists involved in it.

Eva Hess died a few years ago, but during her short career she had an influence on sculpture. Her materials, often arranged in rows or groups with an order, had an organic look because of their softness (fiberglass, rope, wire), and because she often relied on gravity to make the form. Her work became a symbol to many young

women sculptors, and today you can see her influence especially in art schools all over the country.

Robert Morris, who had been the leading minimal sculptor, wrote an article for *Artforum* in the late sixties called "Antiform," and reproduced his new felt sculptures. This signaled the end of the primary structure and the beginning of a new freedom without restrictions on what materials a sculpture could be made of. A couple of years later there was another article in *Artforum* written by Willoughby Sharp about Joseph Beuys. This revealed to America a great German artist who for a decade had been making sculpture out of "curious" materials, like fat and felt. Robert Morris, whose article had had the effect of changing the look of sculpture in New York, had been influenced by Beuys but had not acknowledged it. From that day on, after the Beuys article, Morris's reputation as an innovator was damaged.

In modern times, I think, there are basically two schools: the expressionists and the constructivists. They usually don't agree with each other. Expressionists say about the constructivists that they are tight-assed people without a soul making impersonal art. And the constructivists say about the expressionists that they just jack off in public. Some people are borderline cases, but I think most artists fall into one of these two categories.

Barry Le Va went from being an expressionist to being a constructivist. In the early sixties he was a main influence in the antiform movement. His work was gestural, the arrangement of small pieces of material, usually felt, by chance or by manipulation with an object, like a broom; or by scattering. He also did an action, running back and forth in the gallery, slamming his body against each wall, leaving marks on the wall. These were very definitely expressionistic gestures. He then made a transition to formal art, doing works that combined the expressionist and constructivist positions. For the past few years he has been carefully arranging small pieces of material, usually wood, according to a worked-out system based on the dimensions of the gallery. He determines the placement of these small pieces by

marking the points where intersecting lines and arcs overlap. These are worked out in preparatory drawings. The intersecting lines start from imagined points outside the gallery or under the floor. The lines then cross marks on one wall and the floor, continue across the gallery, and determine new marks on the opposite wall. The result looks almost the same as the scatter pieces, only cleaner. But they are constructivist works. The change in approach by Le Va is the most interesting fact of his work for me.

The earlier work reflected a revolutionary time that the culture was going through in the late sixties. Now we are in a conservative, leveling-out time. There are no leaders in the country, or revolutionaries, even in art. Nothing new is happening. Established artists are retreating into their old styles, summarizing, cutting their hair short, keeping a low profile, wanting to be recognized in the small art community but not necessarily in the world at large.

In the late sixties several sculptors, some second generation minimal sculptors, began making project, land and earth art: Walter De Maria, Robert Smithson, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Heiser, Jan Dibbets from Holland and Richard Long from England.

The earth art movement, called land art in Europe, was about moving artwork outside the gallery into the landscape, a neutral, open place. It carried the importance of concept into a complete break from object art. Michael Heiser, Robert Smithson, and Dennis Oppenheim were the three main artists working in the American landscape in the late sixties.

Heiser's work is the closest to traditional sculpture, in that it emphasizes form and scale. In one work he translated a "sketch" from a sidewalk in New York to the desert of Nevada. He dropped five wooden matches on the sidewalk, photographed the position they landed in, and enlarged this pattern in scale to look the same from an airplane. "Double Negative," his most famous work, involved cutting two enormous sections out of the sides of two hills facing each other.

Robert Smithson was for me the least interesting of the earth artists but one of the most interesting writers on the theory of art. He died in a plane crash in the line of duty, while searching out a site for a new work about three years ago.

Dennis Oppenheim became known as one of the leading earth artists in '67 and '68. Marking the surfaces of the earth, cutting rings in the snow in Maine, cutting wheat with a tractor in S curves in Holland, making corkscrew shapes with smoke from a skywriting airplane on the West Coast, etc. In 1970 Oppenheim made an evolution in his work from the land to his body. For example, he ran full speed across a mud field, then made plaster casts of the footprints, condensing the distance and stacking them in a row in a gallery. In one work he used his body as a bridge between two walls, while in another his body is lying between two mounds of dirt so that the body is at rest in the valley between the two mounds. These two works were juxtaposed to each other in photographs. The next step for Oppenheim was combining the land and his body directly; he made a film of his stomach with stones on it—-as he moved his muscles up and down the stones rolled off, looking like an earthquake propelled them. This use of his body as a field, as a landscape, was an interesting transition of art styles, from earth art to body art, which was a form of conceptual art (action or performance). Later Oppenheim learned to merchandise the documentation of his actions by combining texts, photos, maps, drawings, etc. in a kind of display package, and he has gained a reputation as the bargain basement artist of conceptual art. Like most other first generation conceptual artists in New York, he has stopped making performances. His new work is environmental, and shows himself as the detective, the lecturer, the magician, recaller, etc.

Situational, or environmental, art is art made for the place it is shown, physical space and often political and social position of the inviting institution taken into account. Happenings were situational, so is earth art, so is most conceptual art. Walter De Maria is the model situation artist, although it is difficult to further categorize him. In the middle sixties he did some drawings that were nearly blank, each

sheet containing one word in pencil: "sun," "river," "field," etc. Then he began composing large-scale projects. "Art Yard," a work consisting only of text, described an event with bulldozers, bleachers for spectators. He also drew two lines in the desert as a proposal for two parallel walls, one mile long, to be built there. But his most famous work was the realized project of filling the Heiner Freidrich gallery in Munich in 1968 about halfway full of dirt. The statement accompanying this show read: "God has given us the earth and we have ignored it." Later on in the seventies when De Maria exhibited fewer and fewer projects, he kept to himself and became something of a mystery. Artists would speculate about what his next project would be—like one friend of mine who joked that De Maria's next work would be the stampeding of a herd of rhinos through Manhattan Island. De Maria's recent work is a series of pointed steel poles, about twenty feet high, erected in a pattern in the land to catch the lightning.

De Maria was given the cover and some inside pages of *Arts* magazine; he had his name in small type put on the cover and photos of himself enjoying some hash on the inside pages with no text. Another two-page spread, in *Artforum*, had his name repeated over and over again running across the page, superimposed on a photo of a landscape, like a chugging train, the train that thought he could; it read: WalterDeMariaWalterDeMariaWalterDeMariaWalterDeMaria. For his contribution to VISION he has selected special colored paper. It is a direct use of material in a publication, not a reproduction, making it an original artwork. (Each issue of VISION has included an original work in this sense.)

By the early seventies, museums began to discover something they called "project art" —a non-portable art that had to be installed by the artist either in the museum or elsewhere. Christo, a Bulgarian-born artist who has lived in New York for ten years or more, first came to the art world's attention at the 1968 Dokumenta where he showed a 28-story-high inflated plastic cylinder. He has since conceived such overwhelming projects that it was finally necessary for him to develop his own museum structure to manage his works. In 1969 he wrapped one million square feet of Australian

coastline in plastic. In 1972 he stretched an orange nylon curtain across a canyon in Colorado. He hired recognized curator Jan Van der Marck to direct the curtain project, and Peter Selz, former director of the University of California Art Museum, to curate his most recent work. This was a twenty-four-mile nylon fence, eighteen feet high running through two counties in Northern California and disappearing into the Pacific Ocean. This project cost him two million dollars and became a news event for its two-week duration in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was casually spoken about as Christo's fence by people who never thought about art before. His name is like Picasso to the general public in Northern California. The project became an all-encompassing social artwork. There were helicopter rides over the work, farmers sold barbecued chicken, home-baked pies and Christo souvenirs along the road. At one point the white fence cut half-way through a small town between the general store and a restaurant, with an opening for the main road, making the town like a large theater set with a stage curtain. And all the residents, tourists and highway patrol (directing traffic) became the actors. Christo hired his own police force, made up of art students, to protect the work. He has a staff for each project the size of a large museum: legal department, security people, installers, preparators, publicity department, etc. He is, above all, a business artist, a corporate artist. He has raised literally millions to realize projects that have no function other than their own process.

Christo calls himself a process artist, to emphasize that the process of creating the work—in all its physical, social and psychological aspects—is more important than the product. This is also a way of talking about conceptual art.

The break from object art started with the fluxus artists and happenings, but these included dance, theater, music, literature, the same as the dada movement. Also like dada, the fluxus events were done by a band of iconoclasts, and were a rejection of the visual art world, an offshoot. The conceptual art of the late sixties evolved naturally out of the traditions of art as they were being explored and extended. The immediate past has demonstrated that the art is not

necessarily the artist's hand; it is the artist's idea, or concept. If this is true, then originality (as well as craft) is important, just as it is important to a creative scientist.

The conceptual art movement that was established by 1970 has now become the art of the seventies. Basically, conceptual art is an idea-oriented situation not directed at the production of static objects. There are three main categories: systems, language and action. In systems, to produce visually an explanation of a process developed in an orderly way, leaving exposed the method and materials used for its execution. In language, to produce visual images through the use of language, to use language as a material to form an idea. In action, to produce an activity that the audience experiences at the moment of its creation, to transmit the intelligence of the artist directly to others, using real time as a material.

The systems area of conceptual art includes Sol LeWitt, Barry Le Va, Hans Haacke, and, to a lesser degree, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne. This area is the most product-oriented and conservative of conceptual art. The artist works with a concept, devising the execution of his work according to a plan (system). In most cases the work of these artists is situational.

Sol LeWitt's major work at this time is drawing directly on walls, although he also produces prints and drawings on paper as realizations of his ideas. His drawings sometimes suggest literal images like diagrams for astronomy or cubist painting, but they are carried out according to a pre-formed plan; for example, "all two-part combinations of arcs from corners and sides, straight, not-straight and broken lines." Another work is "lines not long, not straight and not touching;" another involves the location of a point on the surface with many preparatory marks and lines to find such a point. All preparation, including a written description of the plan, is incorporated into the work. Nothing is hidden or erased in LeWitt's work, not even mistakes (like two lines touching when the plan says they should not touch). These are left and become a part of the work. They don't destroy the concept because these are not computer drawings, but

human drawings. LeWitt has worked on all types of irregular wall surfaces. He incorporates the architecture of the gallery into his master plan. In his work prepared for this issue of VISION, he is showing the wall drawings of his neighborhood.

Dorothea Rockburne was in the early seventies working with oil-stained paper environmentally, by running the paper works around corners and onto the floor, maintaining a painter's eye and not making sculpture works. She has made "drawings that make themselves" by folding the paper and drawing lines where the edge stops; or using carbon paper pinned to the wall, marking the paper, transferring the lines to the wall, and folding the paper back again, exposing the line. Paper became her primary material. I think no other artist before her used drawing as the major act of art and brought it to the status of painting. About two years ago she turned to painting on canvas, preparing raw linen with the traditional coatings of the Renaissance, using glue, sizing, etc., rather than paint—using raw materials with no illusions.

Mel Bochner visually describes the principles of painting and sculpture through the use of basic materials such as stones, walnut shells, pennies, matchsticks, chalklines. Like Johns, he finds numbers beautiful. He has made artworks that explain the theory of relativity, a basic modern sculpture principle. The work "Principles of Detachment" has stones on the floor with numbers on them that reflect one another but not in a mirror reversal. The inversion is one triangle rotated and flipped over on its back to form a second triangle. His materials are so common that he can pick them up any place and create environmental works. His earliest conceptual art works were done directly on the wall; he was probably the first conceptual artist to work on the wall. While his work in the past basically explained sculpture, now, since '73, it explains painting. He paints colored geometric shapes on the walls of a gallery; a single work cannot be seen all at once because of its width, and each painted section can only relate to all the others through memory.

Hans Haacke originally worked with ecological systems,

plants and animals. In one work, for example, he introduced a sprinkler system into a small section of a normally dry forest to demonstrate the far-reaching changes caused by introducing a man-made system into nature. In 1970 he moved to social and political systems. His show at the Guggenheim Museum in 1971 included documentation, with names and photos, of slums and slum-lords, one of whom was associated with the museum. The show was canceled, and the curator, Edward Fry, who organized it was fired, after defending Haacke's right to show the entire range of his systems uncensored.

Two years ago for an exhibition in Germany, "Project," Haacke documented the history, including the sale and resale, of a classical painting owned by the host museum. This work of Haacke's was excluded from the show. Daniel Buren, a French artist also invited to exhibit, was outraged at this treatment of Haacke. Buren uses sections of paper or cloth with awning-type stripes as his signature, which he integrates into the urban landscape. After pasting one wall in the corridor with so many sections of vertical stripes the size of easel paintings, he continued the collage idea by pasting smaller photographs of the excluded Haacke piece on top of each of his sections. The museum then proceeded to paste white pieces of paper over the Haacke reproductions that were over the Buren pieces, defacing the artwork and so unintentionally continuing the collage one step further.

Daniel Buren was invited to make a work for this issue of Vision to give a non-New Yorker's view of New York City. He has exhibited many times in New York, but lives in Paris.

Les Levine, an artist who also works with social and political material, once could have been called a systems artist. In 1969 he filled a vacant lot with plastic curved module shapes and removed them a few at a time, every day for a month, to reveal the vacant lot. The accompanying poster read, "You get more with Les," a pun on the popular phrase, "less is more" used to explain minimalism. Since that time he has been moving fast and changing his materials often, so it appears that he has a short attention span and doesn't have a

definitive style. He opened a restaurant about six years ago specializing in Irish, Jewish, and Canadian cuisine. The restaurant had closed circuit TV. He has presented characters (himself in make-up): one in black face (a parody on the new black consciousness); an Arab (after the oil embargo); a Chinese wearing his official government uniform—horn-rimmed glasses, suit and tie (after friendly relations with China). He has been making videotapes of comedy-parodies of the contemporary art world. He acts as a reporter-educator, and considers himself a "media artist." He steps on some toes and because of the parody in his work and his blatant use of publicity (the posters for his last show, illustrated in the work he did for VISION, saturated Soho), he has gained the reputation of being a wise-guy whiz kid.

Artists working in language, the most radical area of conceptual art, have carried minimalist thinking, a subtraction of material, to the point of no object at all. The subject and properties of the art are suggested through the use of language. The visual nature of the art is provided by the viewer, who uses the artist's language as a starting point for his own illumination. The art language movement has suggested to some people that "conceptual art isn't visual," but all visual art is visual, including all conceptual art. It is true that there are a few people who call themselves language artists and they write (but are not writers as anyone who reads the work can tell), producing pages of text which is not visual (it is often Marxist rhetoric). But there are also visual artists who use language (like De Maria or Bruce Nauman), and there are language artists who work visually, like Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner.

Robert Barry, originally a painter, continually reduced his work to the point of invisibility. He is the ultimate invisible artist and for me the most successful language artist. He was the originator of the much-copied idea "for my show the gallery will be closed." He also showed FM radio waves, naturally invisible, overhead in a gallery, yet defined them on a wall label in such a way as to create a picture in the mind of the observer. When he stopped painting he said that he discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at. This quote by Barry sums up his philosophy: "The sound of my carrier

wave pieees is only a elue to an entire environment, only a means to make people aware." He is a teaeher and once assigned his elass to eoneeive of a work that would not be known to anyone outside the elass, and added the eondition that if information on the work leaked out the work would eease to exist. One time he presented all the known words introdueed into the English language during the sixteenth eentury. Many word pieees are presented in the form of slide projeetions. In the above example the words were in red, ehanging every few seeonds. He has presented in a show, "All the things that exist that are not known to me." Even though his works are usually invisible, he is without question a visual artist.

Lawrenee Weiner in 1968 ran strings between stakes driven into the ground and these strings were eut by irate people. He then realized that his pieee did not have to exist, that its effeet had been in suggesting it. After doing several works involving the removal of something like a seetion of a gallery wall or a square from a rug in use, Weiner began proposing situations with words. These usually explained that it was not neeessary to make the works, onee we were made aware of them. One of these works was, for example, "An objeet tossed from one eountry to another." Two others were: "A rubber ball thrown at the sea. A rubber ball thrown on the sea." Several years ago Weiner moved to Amsterdam, setting up residenee. This move suggested, like the move to Europe of several jazz musieians in the fifties and sixties, a dissatisfaetion with the plaee innovative art has in the Ameriean eulture. Naturally in the most eapitalistie eulture in the world an art form like eoneeptual art that is hard to market will not be easily aeeepted. Art based on ideas has more aeeeptanee in Europe where museum eurators in general are more seholarly and less involved with eommereial gallery eonneetions. Weiner's move to Holland I viewed as an artwork.

The third area of eoneeptual art, aetion, is also ealled performanee art or performanee seulpture. The primary aetivity for this is not in New York but in Dusseldorf, San Franeiseo, Rome and many parts of Eastern Europe. Three main figures for this art in New York are Vito Aeeonei, Dennis Oppenheim, and William Wegman.

Recently performance art in New York has become a popular form of inexpensive entertainment used in galleries and the Whitney Museum, but because of the dominance of important dancers there, it gets mixed up with other art forms.

Action conceptual art is the activity of an artist working, carrying out research using materials that include the passage of time. An audience may observe this activity, like a group of medical students observing an operation in the round. The art is not participatory as in happenings. The art is not a repeat from a script as in theater. It is not a piece of real life—the artist's role in society is to observe real life and report on it poetically. If the movement of his materials is sure and honest, the work becomes a beautiful gesture. If he is pretending, acting out, he is doing a piece of theater and not a work of sculpture.

Vito Acconci came into visual art by way of literature. Originally a recognized poet in the esoteric literary world, he became the leading figure in this country of the body art movement, using his body as the field and portions of his body as material for making actions that gave deep psychological revelations into personality. His works have also introduced into the art world literary and theatrical elements. In 1972 in an exhibition organized on a pier he spent several nights alone at the end of the pier revealing secrets about himself to people who would come out there one at a time. For the *Software* show he spent his time in the museum invading the eighteen-inch space, the invisible barrier, people have around themselves. For the *Information* show he had all his mail forwarded to the museum and put on a table every day. He made an action involving making eye contact with each person in the audience. He made a learning piece, playing a record of Leadbelly's a little at a time, over and over, singing along with it to an audience until he had learned the entire song. His most famous work, because of an article in *Artforum*, was the planting of his seed through masturbation under a false wedge-shaped floor in the Sonnabend Gallery while fantasizing about the people walking above him on the slanted floor. In a way, he is out of place in the New York art world where the majority of the art produced is cool and constructivist. But the honesty in his work and his

lack of fear of making a fool out of himself is, for me, the key to a great artist. Now that performance art has reached academic proportions, artists like Acconci have stopped making performances or actions. Acconci's last several works have been environmental, often using slide projections, tape recordings, and video.

A tool used by many action conceptual artists is video, a whole area by itself, used more and more by visual artists. There have been many attempts to publish and market artists' videotapes, first (in the late '60s) by the German dealer, Gerry Schum, who committed suicide a few years ago. Some New York galleries sell video cassettes and some art collectors have playback decks attached to their television sets. Most major museums now have video equipment, thanks to the promotion of the medium by David Ross of the Long Beach Museum.

But the most obvious use of artists' videotapes is to broadcast them, and cable TV seems a fertile ground. The art journalist for *Newsweek*, Douglas Davis, is a video artist who has pioneered the use of cable television, broadcasting over Manhattan Cable. Davis has been instrumental in creating Cable Soho, which is just coming into existence, and plans regular broadcasts of video art. Davis uses the medium directly, as an educational tool. In one tape he works with the intimacy of the medium, inviting the viewers to place their hands against his hands pressed against their TV screens.

Video is an intimate medium, one-to-one. It is different from film, which is shown in a darkened theater to many people, the image and light projected from behind the viewer to the screen. Video is seen in a lighted room (preferably a home or a bar), and the image is from inside the TV projected out toward the viewer. Also, video is immediate, both for the viewer, who can turn it on (or off) anytime, and for the artist working with it. It can be seen at the same time it is recorded and can be replayed immediately. The tape is inexpensive and can be re-used, creating the opportunity for real-time use without regard for lost footage as in film.

William Wegman is an action artist who uses video as his major medium. He came to New York from California (is still included in shows of California art out here) but has lived in New York for about five years and made his reputation there. He began by making environmental situations, two side-by-side almost the same, designed so that you could find the difference. These were sculptural about the relationship of two objects, two environments and were designed for the still camera. Lately he has been using a video camera to record comic situations, using his dog (Man Ray), trying to teach him tricks. The tapes are about learning, but the deadpan, uncomprehending look of the dog makes them funny.

Conceptual artists, whether they work in systems, language, or action, are usually sculptors. This is still an age of sculpture, and every five years someone proves painting is dead, but then some painters come along and revitalize it.

Robert Ryman is the ultimate perfectionist (after Kelly). His own signature is made with as much care as the work. His paintings, usually made from white material or painted white, are simple, elegant pieces of purity, presented without fanfare or frames. He will design his paintings, sometimes, to fit the gallery where they are to be shown, keeping the scale just right.

Brice Marden is a good old-fashioned painter in the tradition of Rothko. He brings painterly concerns to their logical conclusion by building up layer on layer of wax paint to create tactile, physical slabs of paint, sheets of subdued color or gray, usually in sections of two or three. While these works don't necessarily evolve art any further, they are comforting and quieting.

Robert Mangold uses geometric shapes, sometimes imperfect, perfectly presented in the least interesting way possible. His work is deliberately plain, yet it always retains balance. "His approach involves the fusion of extremes—the assertion of an impassive surface and an almost invisible atmospheric haze," wrote Lucy Lippard about Mangold in her book *Changing*.

Joel Fisher is a young artist whose work has been shown as painting and sculpture at the same time, and reflects an attitude of quiet and modesty. He makes paper, using sometimes his own clothes or hair. At first he simply showed the paper, hanging on the wall like paintings or stacked like a piece of sculpture. Lately he has done a series in which he selected one prominent hair that had been formed by chance in the paper, and copied it with pencil, close to the original, enlarging it and giving an incredible sense of depth. The surface drawing shape seems to be projected from the smaller organic version imbedded inside the paper. A collection of these drawings comprises his alphabet.

Chuck Close's work summarizes a lot of styles in art. He paints according to a system of grids, pre-determined as in systems conceptual art. (His paintings disguise his method of working, but his prints and drawings demonstrate it.) Like an action artist he works ritualistically, so many hours a day, on a tight schedule, working scientifically so close to the surface that the whole is not seen until the entire grid is filled in. He uses a pop art manner of reproducing, in essence, commercial color printing processes, layer on layer of four basic printing colors, with no blending, creating a realistic portrait. These portraits are faces the size of your body when you stand in front of them. Up close, your body experiences them in an architectural scale, like coming up to a wall or a door—similar to the way large-scale minimal sculpture is experienced. It was fascinating to me when I first saw Chuck Close's work, that a painting of this scale draws you up to it, and at close range is pulsating, while it functions with photographic realism from across the room.

All the art in this text is part of history. New York has been the center of art for a quarter of a century. But because of worldwide intercommunication the art that is most characteristic of its own region is the most valid art today. The new art does not imitate New York. When the Whitney Annual became an art school show, and the Modern adopted the old Met's policy of only showing "dead" artists, and Birdland turned into a topless discotheque—this signaled to me the decline of New York City as Babylon.

Déjà Vu: Art to Fit a Situation, December 1976
San Francisco Magazine.

I was asked by San Francisco magazine to design a work of art for one page of this issue, and in the future to function as art curator for art pages in succeeding issues. I will invite other artists to design works for reproduction here. The works will be by artists who make situational art, that is, art made for the place it is shown (taking the environmental, political and social position of the inviting institution into account), and not work made and later reproduced as photos of paintings and sculptures. These artists, including myself, are sculptors and conceptual artists who believe that sculpture has evolved into new dimensions of time and the psychic. In such art the present moment gains great relevance and is therefore situational.

The work I have produced here is meant to be seen the way most people look at popular magazines on a newsstand—by flipping the pages from back to front with the left hand. The statement, "THERE IS MEANING IN life ONLY IF YOU DEVOTE YOURSELF TO society," was photographically produced to appear as if moving past the viewer's line of vision. As the reader flips the page, the image of its movement creates a split-second delayed picture. This is my attempt to produce a condition known as déjà vu.

After deciding (six years ago) that my life's work had a public and social side as well as a private one, I established a museum for artists working outside painting and sculpture, who were doing experiments with materials, much like scientific experimentation. The purpose of the new art is to communicate the artist's intelligence through his craft (visual information). The artist produces an "action," an activity that the audience experiences at the moment of its creation, like a group of medical students observing an operation in the round. The art is not participatory as in happenings or encounter groups. The art is not a repeat from a script as in theater and is not a piece of real life. The artist's role in society is to observe real life and report on it poetically.

See What I'm Saying, 1977-78
Artist's book printed on the occasion of the solo exhibition *The Sound of Flight*, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, California.

DRAWING. This drawing is the result of rubbing and beating with silverplated wire drum brushes against a large piece of sandpaper. The sandpaper has tooth and makes sound as I brush it. Over a period of several hours the brushing wears through the sand and begins to reveal the inner construction of the paper: the fibers and the imperfections. Silver is transferred to the paper from the brushes. The result is a silverpoint drawing.

PAINTING. These works suggest traditional brush painting because the movement of the arms and hands during the actions demonstrates a practiced mark. I discovered that there is a definite pattern created by what is a comfortable movement in my arms. The right hand makes an enclosed continuous movement like an artist's palette, a female-like form, while the left hand makes a single arc, up and down, an angular male-like form.

WRITING. I've been making these brushing actions for several years and they change like handwriting changes as personality changes. These sheets have become documentary automatic writings. The pedestal the drawing board lies on is a lectern that I stand behind. This talking-drumming, a primitive form of communicating, is altered with subtle changes through more or less pressure applied against the surface.

MUSIC. The paper is placed on a hollow-core door, which is lying horizontally on a stand. The door acts as a sounding board and is basically the same construction as a violin, two thin sheets of wood with hollow space in-between. This musical instrument is amplified with two microphones. The weight of the board rests on one and it picks up bass sounds. The other microphone picks up the treble sounds and sends them through a time delay echo box. Because of the echo I can play a duet with myself. The paper then becomes a pictorial record of the sound activity.

CRAFT. I am developing a technique of making immaterial pictures. I think it's a craft I can learn. The constant drum brushing puts me into a trance-like state. The rhythm is coordinated with my body's actions. As I brush, an image slowly appears. I can see elements of fantasy in the mark. Whatever image appears to me becomes the picture I try to send telepathically to any witnesses to this action.

SCULPTURE. I see the world as a sculptor, sound as a material and my brushes as tools that create conditions demonstrating basic sculpture principles: the relationship of elements in space and time.

Predictions '78, 1978
Presented at the Alternative Art Spaces Conference, Los Angeles, California.

More sex in art.
California mysticism will reach New York.
Performance and video art are all over.
Everything in art will slow down.
Alternative art spaces will be re-named low budget spaces.
Museums will become shopping centers.
There will be a homosexual art movement.
San Francisco will become the world art center.
Fat coffee table books will be written on conceptual art.
Sony will develop videotape that cannot be reproduced.
Pattern painting will end as fast as op art did.
Etching will replace lithography as a hot new medium.
Art schools will have two departments: crafts and conceptual art.
Art magazines will look like Newsweek.
Artists will decide once and for all they cannot reach the public.
The Third World will produce another Leonardo.
Art schools will teach business, photography, graphic design, electronics, acoustics, political science, museum administration, drafting, writing and public speaking to sculpture students.
The Museum of Conceptual Art will start a museum school, "The Academy of MOCA."
A woman in Texas will buy buildings in New York to establish permanent installations of environments.
Video art will become known as TV art.
Art institutions will have their own TV satellite network and have live conferences and programs to promote aesthetics.
Alternative art spaces will be made in the image of the National Endowment for the Arts, a government agency.
Lowell Darling will lose the race for governor but get his own TV show.
Joseph Beuys will move to Northern California.
Sol LeWitt will become the first living American to have a show in the Louvre in Paris.

Lichtenstein will parody photography in his painting.
Oldenburg will design a new museum in Holland in the shape of a wooden shoe.
Andy Warhol will declare punk is dead.
Jasper Johns will start to use perspective.
Carl Andre will go back to work on the railroad.
Dan Flavin will retire from art and devote his time to sketching and tasting wine.
Walter De Maria will be given the cover of Newsweek to design.
Christo will work smaller.
Vito Acconci will produce a play on Broadway.
David Ross will be appointed director of a museum in Texas.
Dennis Oppenheim will make a large sculpture for the Shah of Iran, despite criticism from his friends.
Brice Marden will mix hashish with wax to make colors of higher intensity.
Chuck Close will become the official portrait painter for Presidents.
Robert Irwin will become a movie star.
The Mattel Toy Company will come out with a Chris Burden doll.
Doug Wheeler will make a room for the White House.
Jim Melchert will become head of the art department at U.C. Berkeley.
Terry Fox will build the world's largest guitar.
Alanna Heiss will open 3 more alternative spaces.
Marcia Tucker will organize a show called "Good Art."
Maurice Tuchman and Peter Selz will open a school for wayward girls.
Still more Morris Louis paintings will be discovered in his garage by his dealer.
Cooking will be taught in art school.
The Berkeley Art Museum will be converted into a parking garage.
By 1980, everyone in America will consider themselves artists, and artists will be forced to call themselves something else.

Manifesto, 1979

Narration for the video "1979," San Francisco, California.

I've realized that my concept of performance art is old fashioned. It's old fashioned to insist that performance art is sculpture evolved into the fourth dimension. Something I learned from Miles Davis was that by turning his back on the audience when he played, he was an artist working. He said once that he was a musician not a performer. I have held on to my notion of the sculpture action where the action is directed at the material I'm manipulating, instead of at the audience, like in theater. I can see this is a '60s European idea of this kind of art. In '70 when I started MOCA as a specialized sculpture action museum, I made my own rules and defined conceptual art as idea oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects. Now the break from the object isn't an issue anymore. Ten years ago it was important to make a statement against materialism by making actions instead of objects. Now with some artists in my generation there's a return to the object, not as an end in itself, but as material to explain a function, like before the Renaissance where the object was used in a social, architectural or religious way. But the '70s is, and the '80s probably will be, a cosmetic age of decoration and theatricality.

Word of Mouth, 1980
VISION # 4. Talk for a conference on Ponape Island in the Pacific Ocean, sponsored by Crown Point Press and the Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco, California.

I have this Museum of Conceptual Art in downtown San Francisco. The building is owned by the city and they give it to me rent-free. In 1974 the agency gave the 3rd floor of this building to another non-profit organization, The Chinese Youth Alternative.In Chinatown there are two gangs, the Hong Kong born (called the Wa Ching) and the American born Chinese. The Wa Ching were upstairs from me. They would hold dances up there, have fights, fuck, and sail day-old donuts out the window at pedestrians. After about six months they screwed up the plumbing and were evicted. They had demolished the third floor, knocked out the interior walls and spray painted English and Chinese graffiti everywhere. I sent out announcements and opened the space as an environmental exhibition, as a sort of West Coast West Side Story.

A year later, for a group show called "Second Generation" at MOCA, one of the artists painted a large section of the back wall, ceiling and floor white to set up a space for his performance. After the show, this white section interfered with the character of the space. It had been a printing company for fifty years before I moved in to make it a museum. Being concerned with traditional museum functions like preservation, collection, and restoration, I have kept the space as a relic of a mechanical age. There have been works built into the architecture of the space, and there is residue from actions made there that have become integrated into the space. About six months after the "Second Generation" show, the *Night Watch* by Rembrandt was slashed in the state museum in Amsterdam. They built a special room in the museum with windows around it so the public could see the restoration like sidewalk spectators. The painting was laid out on a large operating table and it took a year to fix it. This gave me the idea to restore the back wall area of MOCA. Up until this time there had not been a painting show in MOCA. I asked a painter friend of mine, David Ireland, if he wanted to collaborate with me to fix the space.

He built a scaffold to work on the ceiling. Working every day for a month, he scraped the white off the floor and rubbed it with printers' ink to stain it, and replaced the moldings that had been cut away. He worked from photographs to match the color on the wall where there were painted shapes. Over the years equipment had been painted around and when the printing company moved out it left all this evidence of its fifty-year history. Each day I would video tape the progress, a kind of time lapse photography. We were making a photo realist painting and when the work was done there was a completely invisible artwork.

Until last May when they went out of business, there was a famous old San Francisco bar downstairs from my museum. Breens Cafe had been used for video exhibitions, radio shows and most of the social activities for the museum. It was known as the saloon of MOCA. In 1976 I began hanging out there every Wednesday afternoon with my friends. After a while I sent cards out announcing "two to four, Cafe Society" every Wednesday. It turned into a vital social situation, an open house to meet new people. Word got around and visitors came by from out of town. A lot of beer was drunk, there was communication and the beer was an aid to communication, a kind of disguised performance where nothing actually happened. I didn't attempt to photograph this activity although sometimes other people did. I didn't want to take a chance on exposing it as a work of art and so make it static and self-conscious.

I have used these three examples to demonstrate some of my attitudes about invisible art.

Artists' Photographs, 1982
Introduction for VISION #5, Crown Point Press, San Francisco, California.

In 1960 the great French artist Yves Klein published a photo of himself diving out of his second story apartment window. He had spent his life as an artist trying to experience the void and this photograph of the moment of flight symbolized his work. This photograph functions as a work of art, as poetry. It influenced conceptual artists because it broke from the material confines of painting and sculpture. As a work of art it could only exist as a photograph because it was actually two photographs superimposed in the darkroom by the photographer, Harry Shunk. Safety devices used in the fall were not seen in the altered photograph; the point of the work was to create an illusion not to commit a reckless act. The photographer in this case was following the instructions of the artist; the work was an artist's photograph.

The photograph is such a convincing form it can fool people into believing they have actually seen the event depicted; all artists are familiar with people saying to them, "I have seen your work" when they mean they have seen it reproduced photographically. The case of Rudolf Schwartzkogler is a good example of how convincing a photograph can be. About ten years ago, *Time* magazine reported in an art review that this Austrian artist committed suicide by cutting off his penis as an act of art. This was a false report, believed by everyone who read it, and it has been, ever since, used to try to prove that performance art is degenerate and easily dismissed. The origin of the false report was news of Schwartzkogler's suicide (he jumped out of a window, not as an act of art) combined with the art critic's desire to believe a photograph he had seen. Schwartzkogler was of the Vienna School of artists. In the 1960s they created cathartic rituals, operas and art actions as a counter to the conservative, restrictive birthplace of Sigmund Freud. Schwartzkogler turned his work into photography. He staged photo sessions in his apartment. He used a model, not himself, to perform the work that a photographer photographed under his direction. Bandages, knives, razor blades, hospital

apparatus, etc. were used to create convincing pictures. There was no audience and these symbolic situations were early examples of conceptual photography.

The 56 artists' photographs in this exhibition were all done by artists who are not trained as photographers. They come from the tradition of painting and sculpture (sculpture, for the most part), but their work has become situational; they are artists who design projects and create works of art in whatever material or medium is necessary to the idea of the work; they are conceptual artists. When art moved outside the art gallery, artists began to be involved with photography out of necessity, and they became involved with photographers as technicians for the same reason. The photographer functioned like a cameraman under a movie director. During the last fifteen years, photographs of earth works or art performances have often been exhibited in art galleries to represent the work. In those cases, each artist had created, usually through a photographer, a documentation of his work. The works in this show, however, are not documentations of art works; they are photographs that are art works. The one thing that all these artists have in common is the freedom to realize their art in any medium; this is what separates them from photographers.

The works in the exhibition are in some cases altered photographs. In other cases they are "found" photographs that suggest the style and vision of the artist. Some are photographs of works that are so ephemeral or inaccessible to public view that the only way to see them was to turn them into photographs. And some are situations staged for the camera.

Sometimes there are works of art so obscure and so coded that only the informed underground can interpret them, like the words in rock music of the '60s coded to make references to sex and drugs, yet allowed on the radio because the sponsors did not recognize the lyrics for what they were. Artists do this through symbolism when they are in a politically repressive place, like Russia or Eastern Europe. A message can be conveyed to others by a photograph that

can be taken out of the country easily.

The photographer and the photograph have been accepted into the art world for some time now. Museums have photography curators and art magazines publish articles on photography. Photography, like other crafts—video, ceramics, glass blowing, printmaking for example—can produce creative artists. At one time painting and sculpture were considered crafts. But anyone locked into one medium has a tendency to be concerned with technique and composition only.

Art Against War, 1983
Curator's statement for the exhibition, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California.

This exhibition, "Art Against War," is the result of a year-long Gallery Studies Class here at the Art Institute. We studied all aspects of organizing exhibitions, visited galleries and museums, had guests in class, wrote reports, discussed catalog design, traveling a show, hanging, lighting, how to sell a show idea, and the practical, everyday realities of the art world.

Six San Francisco artists were chosen by the class. The criteria used were that the artists work in different styles and media from each other and that they use subject matter in their work. Robert Arneson, Robert Colescott, Chuck Eckart, Mike Osterhout, Marie Thibeault, and John Woodall were asked to create new works for this show on the theme of anti-war art. The photo blow-ups in the entrance are reproductions of historic anti-war paintings. Upstairs are reproductions of drawings made by survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is also a selection of off-set lithos by John Heartfield made in the '30s in opposition to Hitler and the Nazis' preparation for war.

And finally there is a work in progress by the Gallery Studies Class: an actual facsimile of Picasso's *Guernica*, the most famous painting of the twentieth century (12' x 26,' the same size and same colors—black, white, and gray—as the original).

On April 26 (the opening day of this exhibition) in 1937, the city of Guernica, Spain, became the first city in history to be bombed from the air. Picasso, who was living in Paris, began his famous painting upon hearing reports, and finished the work in one month, making changes daily after reading of the event in the newspaper. *Guernica* was exhibited for the first time in the Spanish pavilion in an international exhibition in Paris. It was on loan to the Museum of Modern Art in New York until last year, when it was returned to Spain.

Picasso said, "Painting is not done to decorate apartments; it is an instrument of war...against brutality and darkness."

Our copy is painted on canvas stapled to the wall. It was painted in the manner of the Renaissance masters with a grid system, the canvas being divided into eight equal sections, each of which were divided into sixteen sections. The grids were about one foot square. The design was then drawn using a small reproduction that was divided into an equal number of squares. The painting process will continue throughout the exhibition.

Einstein said, "If 2% of those eligible for the draft refuse, there would be no war. The jails would not hold them."

The artist can and should take a moral responsibility for the future of the world. The artist has the ability to affect change through poetic and beautiful gestures that in the end can influence (in subtle and subliminal ways) the people with money and power who in turn are in a position to make actual change.

Inspired By Leonardo, 1986
Curator's statement for the exhibition, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California.

In order to place Leonardo da Vinci into an historical context, I will set the scene with some names and dates. He was twenty-one when Copernicus was born in Poland. Twenty-three when Michelangelo was born. Forty when Columbus discovered America.

By then he had invented the concept of automation and later painted what were to become the two most famous paintings of all time, The Last Supper and the Mona Lisa. Many of Leonardo's paintings, including the Mona Lisa, ended up in France because he moved there at the age of 64 at the invitation of the king of France, Francis I. He died at Amboise at the age of 67 in 1519. Francis the First wrote, "No other man had been born into the world who knew as much as Leonardo." So you can see he was recognized in his own lifetime.

This exhibition is not concerned with the paintings of Leonardo but with the studies and explorations of a total artist, who believed that the "eye was the window of the soul." He thought with his eyes and even as a scientist he was a visual artist. By closely observing smoke, he tried to explain why the sky is blue. Make smoke with dry wood, he directed, "Let the sun's rays strike the smoke; and behind the smoke place a piece of black velvet on which the sun does not fall, and you will see all the smoke shows a beautiful blue color." We know now that the sky is blue because dust particles in the air disperse the short blue rays in light, while the longer red and yellow rays pass through.

Leonardo was the first to think of a streamlined ship, and the first to draw an accurate picture of the human heart and describe its action. He invented the helicopter and the diving suit with air reservoir. His drawings of moving water and birds in flight are so tight in detail that photography can hardly improve on them. He made science an art. He even invented small things like the adjustable monkey wrench and directions for making and setting off a stinkbomb. He

made drums that play themselves, invented the clarinet, irrigation machines, a fortress to cover all fields of fire in wartime, the machine gun, the tank, the explosive artillery shell with fins like a rocket, the parachute, water wings, the bicycle, a spring driven horseless wagon, the slide projector, the subway, and on and on.

He represented things as they were rather than as the Church said they must be, and because of this made art a branch of knowledge rather than an instrument of religious expression. Today in totalitarian countries, their governments demand that the function of art is to glorify the state.

Leonardo worked for many years at the court of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, who frequently called on him to do anything from devising a heating system for the duchess' bath water to improving a fortress. Besides being a master at art and science, he was handsome, charming, strong enough to bend a horseshoe with his hands, and gentle enough to buy caged birds in the market place and set them free. He spoke of war as the most bestial madness, yet he invented the most deadly weapons. He refused to eat meat because he hated to have animals harmed, but was able to sketch a man being hanged.

This exhibition consists of works designed and fabricated by five inventive California artists. What these artists have in common is that they start with an idea and create a work in the medium most appropriate to that idea. They also have construction and fabrication as basis for their sculptures. Otherwise they are all very different from each other. Clayton Bailey, Chris Burden, David Ireland, Tony Labat and William T. Wiley collectively have created a diverse and yet cohesive collection of works. Supplemental material made up of enlargements from Leonardo's notebooks and printed in a "brownline" technique (similar to blue printing) give the show a slightly documentary side to balance the original art, which does not translate Leonardo's work literally, but is inspired by it.

Notes on Public Sculpture, 1991
A report for the Central Embarcadero Project, City of San Francisco, California.

Sculpture is about the relationship of forms in space
It should grace the landscape
Not be symmetrical
Use the geometry of nature
Have good proportions
Be controversial at first
Become a thing of pride to the public
Have a subject
Make a point
Be symbolic of something
Not be generic abstract
It should be sensitive to where it is
Work with its neighboring objects
Emphasize local character
Have a social element
Use shadows
Be a spirit in the dark
It is an object that draws you to it
Has poetry or technological information
Predicts the future
Allows your imagination to travel to the past
It should bring people up to the level of art
Fight against a world of standardization
Have layers of meaning
Be open to interpretation
Not be painted red (a little red goes a long way)
It should have more than one side
Not emit obnoxious sounds
Consider acoustics
Reject vandalism
Encourage participation

The Curator of Art, 1995
Artist's Statement for the Exhibition "Anonymous Arrangement," Richmond Art Center, California.

The Curator of Art should

1. Present the best and most poetic examples of our culture's products.

2. Preserve the objects in the gallery's care.

3. Interpret the art for the public.

4. Respect artists and their work.

5. Not make artists anonymous.

6. Not make the curator the artist unless the curator is anonymous.

7. Not mix art and non-art to confuse the public.

8. Not rearrange the artist's work.

9. Not use artists' work as raw material for the curator's own ends.

California Body Art and Its International Roots, 1996
From the exhibition catalog for the show, *The Art Embodied*, Musées de Marseilles, France

Marcel Duchamp said that California is a "white spot in a gloomy world." California is a body culture. It is also an economic power, the sixth largest economy in the world, a country in a country. In New York when people speak of California, or "the coast," they usually mean Los Angeles. I live in San Francisco. I tell people California is 400 miles south of San Francisco. California is divided into two distinct cultures: north and south. In general, the north is liberal except for the art community, and the south is conservative except for Hollywood and the art community. San Francisco is politically and socially liberal, but the arts are supported by old money, traditions and history, by people who admire European style. In Los Angeles, the arts are mostly supported by people with new money who work in the film industry. San Francisco is not an automobile culture. It is small—only 760,000 people. You can walk across San Francisco in a day. Los Angeles is 75 miles across, and the automobile is the only way to get around. It's warm in L.A.; it's cool in San Francisco.

Los Angeles is a body culture because of the beach, the beautiful people, Hollywood, and hot weather that allows people to wear fewer clothes. San Francisco is a body culture because of a strong Asian influence, an interest in Yoga, Zen, and meditation, a centering of the mind and body, a preference for authenticity over style.

There is a figurative tradition in San Francisco art. Painterly gestures were combined with observing real life by a group of artists in the early 50s who reacted against the Abstract Expressionist school in New York and founded what is called the Bay Area figurative style. These artists, who were associated with the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), included David Park (who was the first to break with Abstract Expressionism), Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff and Nathan Oliveira. Their paintings

were expressionistic, with thick paint, but the human figure was the focus of the work. This painting movement was noticed by the New York art establishment, and for a short time San Francisco became the other art center in the United States. Also in the 50s the beat poets were making San Francisco famous for poetry and a bohemian lifestyle.

Funk Art, the second generation of Bay Area figurative art, included sculpture as well as painting. Bruce Conner, William T. Wiley, Robert Arneson, Joan Brown, Robert Hudson and Manuel Neri were the key people. The influence of surrealism entered this work, especially Bruce Conner's assemblages. This 1960s style centered on the figure, but also included found objects, collage, and assemblage.

Artforum magazine was founded in San Francisco in the early l960s, and moved to Los Angeles a few years later to become the major support system for a new movement there of light installation art, practiced by Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Doug Wheeler. By the mid-sixties, Los Angeles had become the new second art center of the United States, and San Francisco was out of the mainstream. By the late sixties a break from tradition was beginning in both Los Angeles and San Francisco as conceptual art came into being as an international art movement. Some San Francisco artists began to focus on sound as a material, as Los Angeles artists were focusing on light.

People in L.A. are obsessed with the future, and people in San Francisco are obsessed with the past. New York is obsessed with the present, with fashion. In the '60s and '70s, art that was made in New York mostly didn't have any color in it. A New York artist told me at the time that California art was New York art with color. The sculpture of the '60s reacted against the anti-intellectualism of Abstract Expressionism and created an intellectual art. Sculpture stood flat on the floor and only considered itself. Later, a materials consciousness developed, and by the late '60s the material of sculpture could include light, sound, language, social and political activi-

ties, or the artist's body. Because the work of the sculptor became so much like scientific experimentation, using esthetics as its form, by 1970 the process had become the art and time had become a factor.

In the performance world, many things had happened prior to the '70s. In 1952 John Cage was teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina where he organized an event that a lot of people credit as the first happening. There were activities going on simultaneously with no apparent connection between them: poetry reading, music, painting, and dance. In 1959, Allan Kaprow coined the name "happenings," and developed the form. Most of the happenings took place in New York, and most of the people who made them in New York were painters (with the exception of sculptor Claes Oldenburg). Painters think differently from sculptors, since they deal with a world of illusion, as does theater. Painting is frontal. The idea of painters making happenings as theater seems logical.

Then, in the early '60s the fluxist art movement began. Fluxus events were different from happenings because they included concrete poetry and music as well as theatrics. Fluxus was made up of Americans, Europeans, and Japanese, and was truly an international art movement. George Maciuas was the artist who brought fluxus artists together. He produced kits and multiples, staged events, and was a general caretaker and organizer. But the main direction came from the influence of John Cage, and because Cage was a composer, fluxus was oriented towards performing and composing, rather than toward the plastic arts of painting and sculpture.

Fluxus artists came from different disciplines, and weren't necessarily visual artists. The absurd activities they performed were very much related to the dadaist era. Some of the fluxus artists of that time were Yoko Ono, Ben Vautier, Daniel Spoerri, George Brecht, Nam June Paik, and Milan Knizak. Many of the fluxus artists were forerunners of the conceptual art movement of the '70s.

Body art is the experiential arm of conceptual art, and the great French artist Yves Klein was a key influence on its develop-

ment. In 1960, Klein did one of his most famous works, *Leap into the Void*. He dove out of a second story window of a Paris apartment and had himself photographed at that moment of flight. It wasn't until 20 years later that most people in the art world learned that there was a net beneath. Klein's trick photograph became a symbol for the whole performance art movement. It didn't have anything to do with telling a story. It was about the artist as material. The artist's body actually was the art object.

The early '60s also was the time that the Vienna School artists, the Viennese actionists, began working with their bodies as material. In the most conservative cultural center in Europe, they were doing cathartic actions, fighting against a nineteenth century mentality. They did the most shocking performances done anywhere, before or since. Gunter Brus and Otto Muehl made actual events, without illusion. Rudolph Schwarzkogler and Hermann Nitsch made illusionistic, theatrical events, often performed by friends or actors. Schwarzkogler's performances were staged for the camera, and were early conceptual photographs, as was Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void.*

Conceptual art has three main branches: language, systems and action. The language artists are mostly in New York and Great Britian. Lawrence Weiner and Joseph Kosuth are key members of the language conceptual art movement. Language is a material to define space or to define works. In some cases language artists make proposals for works that are not necessarily executed. A proposal itself could be the artwork.

Systems conceptual art is also centered in New York. Systems artists think out a mathematical, social, political, or ecological system, and develop a plan for making a work of art. It is not necessary for the artist to produce the work, as long as someone executes it following the artist's plan. Sol LeWitt and Hans Haacke are two of the major systems artists in New York.

Action is the branch of conceptual art that includes body art, and this branch was stronger in Europe and California than in New

York. Performance art in New York was so influenced by theater and dance that it is sometimes not considered a part of conceptual art at all. When New Yorkers speak of conceptual art, they usually mean language art. In California, on the other hand, conceptual art usually means performance art and installation art, and in general there is a European or Asian influence. California body artists in the early '70s saw a way to be part of an international art movement without first being accepted by the New York art establishment. Conceptual art was not one style or one medium but reflected each artist's own culture. Yves Klein and the Vienna actionists influenced California performance art more than anything done in New York. The German artist, Joseph Beuys, and the Japanese Gutai Group were also influences. In l965, for example, Beuys made a performance called *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* in which he sat for three hours silently speaking to a dead hare in his arms, his face covered with honey and gold leaf. The artist became a work of sculpture. In Japan, beginning in 1954, a group of artists who called themselves Gutai used their bodies to manipulate materials. Kazuo Shiraga, for example, laid his body in mud and shaped it by moving his arms and legs. The artist combined the idea of earth art with body art.

Action conceptual art is the activity of an artist working, carrying out research by manipulating materials that include the passage of time. An audience may observe this activity, like a group of medical students observing an operation in the round. The art is not participatory as in some happenings. The art is not a repeat from a script as in theater. If the movement of an artist's material is sure and honest the work becomes a beautiful gesture. If the artist is pretending, acting out, he is doing a piece of theater and not a work of action performance art. Bruce Nauman and Chris Burden are the best known California artists to use their own bodies as material in performance art

The word "actions" is a term that is used in the German speaking countries to define performance art of the' 60s and '70s, but it is rarely used in the United States. Because of the influence of New York, people often wrote about the new performance art as a multi-

media happening and speculated that theater, dance and visual art were merging together. Because I am more interested in what separates the different arts than in their similarities, I organized an event in 1973 to try to make the differences clear. It was performed at the University Art Museum, Berkeley, California. First the janitor of the museum swept the floor. He used a sweeping compound which janitors use to get rid of grease and grit, and his intention was to get the floor clean. Then a dancer swept the floor. She used feathers, and children ran through the feathers as she was sweeping. The dancer was concerned with the grace of the body moving through space. Next, an actor swept the floor. The actor didn't sweep any material, because an actor is only concerned with creating the illusion that he's getting the floor clean. He's playing a role, the role of janitor. Finally, I swept the floor using the same broom. I put sand on the floor, and because I'm a sculptor I was concerned with the manipulation of the material, with my connection to the tool—the broom—and relationships between my materials and my body. What I did was action-performance art, inside a demonstration. The same act—sweeping the floor—done by four different people was different depending on the intent of the person performing it.

In 1966 in California Bruce Nauman did an important work, staged for the camera. It was called *Self Portrait as a Fountain*. In this work, he sprayed water out of his mouth while he was being photographed. Also in 1966, Nauman did a work inspired by Marcel Duchamp called *Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at Ten Inch Intervals*. Nauman was at the time a student of William T. Wiley's at the University of California at Davis, and he provided a direct link between the second generation San Francisco figurative artists and European-inspired conceptual art. Nauman has been a tremendous influence on the whole California body art movement.

In 1970 in San Francisco, I founded the Museum of Conceptual Art, MOCA, a non-profit, tax exempt corporation. I turned my studio into the museum, which held irregularly scheduled artists' performances and exhibitions of installation art. It also functioned socially as a gathering place for artists in the saloon of MOCA,

located in the early years in Breen's bar, which was on the ground floor. In a way, I started MOCA as an excuse for a party, and every Wednesday, beginning in 1973, MOCA has carried on an extension of a work of mine performed at the Oakland Museum in 1970 called *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art.* Although I closed MOCA in 1984, an artists' salon continues to this day in my studio on Wednesday evenings.

Body Works, a video exhibition organized in coordination with Willoughby Sharp, was presented in the saloon of MOCA in 1970, and was—as far as I know—the first body art show in the United States. It included Vito Acconci, Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Terry Fox, William Wegman, and Dennis Oppenheim.

The idea of MOCA was to have a specialized sculpture action museum with a collection consisting of evidence-giving residue, relics, and works built by artists into the architecture of the space. The works in the collection were results of actions by sculptors. Terry Fox, for example, built a meditation chamber in a skylight shaft, and Vito Acconci fixed most of the furniture to the ceiling, where it stayed to the end. When MOCA closed in 1984, the building was torn down and most of the collection was destroyed. There is an archive (now in the collection of the University Art Museum, Berkeley) of photos, videotapes, audio tapes, drawings, plans, papers, and letters, but the site specific works were part of the history of the building. They could not be owned or resold or even removed from the site because their meanings would be lost outside the space for which they were created.

From 1970 through 1975, the first five years of MOCA's history, all the exhibitions took the form of performances by sculptors. After 1975, exhibitions were created for the space and were situations or installations. There were sometimes concerts, but theater and dance were not included. Most of the exhibitions had themes: sound, time, comedy, radio, TV, the body, or social activities, for example.

The Art Student, 1997
Presented in a lecture at the San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California.

Draw every day.
Copy from a master.
Be nice to others, someday they might be on a committee to give you money.
Reject your teachers after you graduate.
Use the geometry of nature.
Every year there are 10,000 more masters of fine art in the U.S.
Only 5% of art school graduates will be practicing artist in 10 years.
Don't be symmetrical.
Take all courses offered.
Eat, drink and be merry.

Artist's Statement For the Exhibition, What is Art For? 1999
Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, California.

For beauty.
For history.
For decorating apartments.
For people to laugh at.
For imitating nature.
For therapy.
For seeing in a new way.
For an educated audience.
For enlightenment.
For political agendas.
For glorifying the church (Renaissance).
For glorifying the state (Communism).
For glorifying the rich (Capitalism).
For recording society in a poetic way.

From a Lecture Presented at Brown University, 1996
Providence, Rhode Island.

I consider myself a sculptor and a conceptual artist. I see the world from the point of view of a sculptor. Sculpture is about the relationship of forms in space. I defined conceptual art in 1970 as "idea-oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects," but now I think of it as an art not defined by a material or medium such as painting, video art, photography, ceramic art, etc. A conceptual artist is free to work in any media (except painting). The artist starts with an idea and realizes that idea in whatever medium is appropriate to that idea. Conceptual art was a broad movement that was international, not centered in one place like earlier movements. Impressionism, Futurism, Abstract Expressionism, and so on were all centered in some place.

The conceptual art movement came about in the late '60s. In California, it is a body culture, so the way people approach conceptual art is different than in other parts of the world. Conceptual art is theatrical in Italy. It is language-oriented and land based in England. The conceptual artists in Germany are scientific in their approach. In Eastern Europe and in Russia, conceptual art was very political and was coded. It was underground. And in California, besides the body culture, it has to do with an Asian influence, Zen in San Francisco and light temples in Los Angeles. In California as much influence comes from Asia as anywhere else. More sunlight makes for art about light and color. On the East Coast their influences come from Europe. Most people in New York think the art in the West is soft and weak. A New York artist said to me in the early '70s "Larry Bell is just Sol Lewitt with color." This remark made me realize how New Yorkers think about California art.

In the '60s, art was very commercial just like it was in the '80s. In the '70s there was a recession, just like we had in the '90s. Not many people bought art in the '70s, and because the late '60s was a very political time, artists took an anti-materialistic or anti-material stance. Lucy Lippard wrote "The Dematerialization of

the Art Object" in 1973. By that time conceptual art had been born out of a moral and political position. Post studio art like earth art was about bringing our attention to ecological concerns. Performance art was about not making objects, systems art brought a scientific element into it. Installations and language art made it possible to make art that was invisible or not something only to look at. It was about ideas and not about making objects as ends in themselves. It was a very frustrating time for the art market. By the '80s, painting returned and collecting became big time again, art seemed to be about money. What some conceptual artists did in the '70s was to sell their framed documentation, like auctioning Wagner's scores or Einstein's notes. That is an example of a way to make this kind of art into a consumer product. All the artists that I knew in the '70s were always concerned about making a living from their art. It is just that the nature of their work sometimes took a documentary form, was residue from an action or used existing objects incorporated into a larger context.

You can see things in a work of art if you take more than just a few seconds to look at it. You can look at it and try to figure out how it was done, and you have a clue from the title. You put all those things together and, eventually, you get most of the story. You never get it all. You go to the opera and if you don't understand Italian you don't get the story, but you still get a lot out of the opera without knowing the words. It is like that in every field. When a scientist looks in a microscope, he might see a cure for cancer. When I look in the same microscope, I see an Abstract Expressionist painting. Sometimes people don't know what they are looking at. Different people get different information depending on what they bring to it.

For me, the difference between theater and performance art is that theater, traditionally, is a storytelling medium, and also the players aren't playing themselves. They are playing a role, they are playing somebody else. In theater there is also an illusion of time. You can watch a play and in the play maybe a whole year goes by. But in an action by a sculptor, which is a more concrete form, the time

is just what the time is. The person performing is acting as himself or herself and, basically, it is not about an illusion of time or about storytelling. Sculpture is about manipulation of materials. In theater the idea is to manipulate the emotions of the audience.

House Rules for the Society of Independent Artists, 1990-99
San Francisco, California.

1. People bring their own drinks, except first timers who don't know any better.
2. Two drink minimum. This means at least two.
3. No beer in cans, except Tecate.
4. No drinking from beer bottle, except in character.
5. No use of telephone, except with consent.
6. No one behind the bar, except bartender.
7. Bartenders can invite up to 3 guests.
8. Guests do not invite guests without checking with the management.
9. No theatre people, except famous movie stars.
10. No art students except those that can pass as professionals.
11. No smoking, except writers or cigar smokers.
12. No touching objects or books on shelves.
13. No art collectors, except in disguise.
14. People should sign guest book at bar.
15. Hours 5 to 8 PM, except on special occasions.
16. Leave bathroom light on.

Sketch Book Notes, 1999.

The problem solving object. It sits there like sunlight on a rock.
The objects audition for inclusion. Stand in objects.
A private sculpture. An invented shape.
Blue sculpture. Family sculpture. Anti-aging sculpture.
Sculpture is an event always in the present.
Social action. Social Art Institute. Yellow Institute.
Social Realism, Wednesday. Beer with friends.
Stylish solids, sophisticated stripes. Corporate socialist realism.
Hard edges for hard times. River of dead photons. Bending Light.
Word of Mouth. Lips made for kissing. Tongue and groove.
Steering a car out of control down a steep street.
Playing the violin in an excited state.
Impure thoughts. A wise crack.
Giving birth to a circle. Magic feather. Pussies of the world.
Walking fixation. Penetration of the mind.
Feast for the eyes. Blossoming virgin.
Groaned archway opening on the infinite.
A baby grand. Upright grand. Classic avant guard.
All Night Sculptures. Content, Elegance, and Subtlety.
There once was a man from Nantucket, and you know the rest.
A joke is like a woman getting out of a car, you either see it or you don't.
If you know what I mean and I think you do.
Brain storming. Waterfront Renaissance. Throat blessing.
A true artist has no sex. A true artist has no race. A true artist has no money.
The age of grievance groups in art is over. Post crisis management.
The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art.
Art is anything done well and by well I mean great like corn on the cob cooked to the moment of perfection.
The past can always be reinvented. We don't need new ideas we need old ideas. The great thing about youth is that everything is new.
Post modernism—destroy the brain and keep the box.
"The real world is a wonderful medium." Jeff Bezos, amazon.com.
He thinks reality is a medium.

More than meets the eye. Outlaw bullets. Mental distancing.
André Breton invented surrealism in 1924. Aleksandr Rodchenko painted 3 monochrome paintings in that same year and declared painting dead.
Being of sound mind. Liberating Light and Sound.
Vehicle of meaning. Train of thought. Corridor of humor.
Waltz of orbiting binary stars. Dance of subatomic quarks. Rays and ZZZ's.
Moment of truth. Event horizon. Light clock.
Melody particle. Sound Sculpture. Comedy Sonatas. Schwarzschild solution, 6 trillion miles in a light year. Multidimensional hole. Extreme black hole.
Room for Interpretation. Garden hose universe.
St. Francis cocktail. A Fine Italian Hand. Galileo's finger.
Leonardo was the Son of God. I'm surprised I have to point this out.
Shape opinion. Light multiplier. Flying white. Path of light.
Superstring theory. 3/4 size violin. A service sculpture.
One Second Sculpture. Sculpture in 2/3 Time. Gravitation waves from colliding black holes.
Collection of characters. Gravity. Waves. Atoms. Decay.
Bangcocktail. Cathexis. Thunderstorm. Cycloid.
Excited sculpture looking at a painting. The Power of Suggestion.
Advanced imaging. Submicroscopic diamonds shaping the invisible.
Nearly all matter and antimatter particles annihilate each other. Nutrinos and milk. Egg rolls.
Matter dominates antimatter everywhere. The spoon ran away with the cup.
Paint a black square on the wall and hang a picture on it.
Thinking out Loud. Philosopher's stone. Opposite of voyeurism is clairvoyance.
Ear to the ground. Acoustic chapel. Forked tongue.
Fork in the road. Fast drive, Jazz listen. Any second now.
Do you follow me? Well don't follow me you make me nervous.
Decrease your desire and you will be more happy.
Ah va ma re e ah. San ta lu che e ah.
A sex, comedy, sculpture, astronomy piece.

Haiku Poem, 1996
San Francisco, California.

5 Hai ku po e try
7 Has se ven teen syl la bles
5 Tom Ma ri o ni